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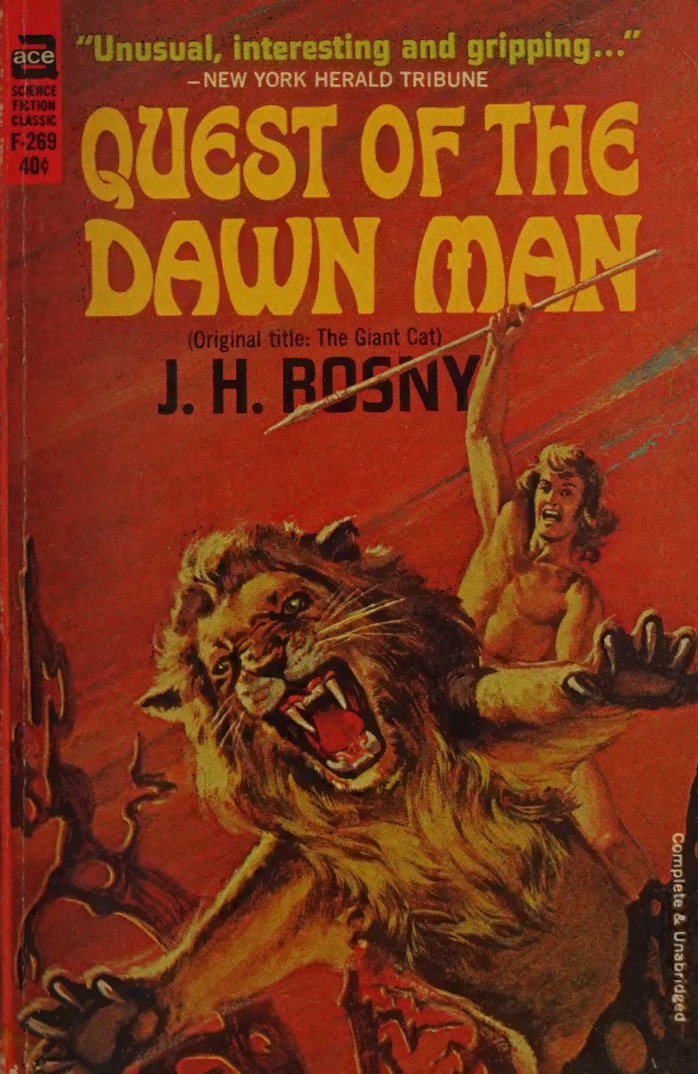
QUEST OF THE DAWN MAN

(Original title: The Giant Cat)

J. H. ROSNY



Complete & Unabridged

ADVENTURE AT THE WORLD'S DAWN

Aoun, son of Urus, was tall and strong and delighted in the hunt. His courage was legion and his strength formidable, but he had a strange weakness that the other Oulhamr tribesmen did not understand—he could feel pity. His companion was Zouhr, last of the Men-without-Shoulders, whose subtle, dreamy intelligence was also unique among men.

They set out, these two, to discover new and fertile hunting grounds for the horde, in the unknown land beyond the mountains. Here they would encounter the fierce sabertooth, the giant lion, the crocodile, the huge python, and wild mammoth. But most dangerous of all, these two would have to face alone the strange primitive hordes of the forest—the half-men who ate the flesh of other men.

J. H. ROSNY was the pen-name of Joseph Henri Honoré Boëx who, throughout his long life (1856-1940), was one of France's most prolific writers. Since he originally collaborated with his younger brother, under the joint signature of J. H. Rosny, he was generally referred to as J. H. Rosny *ainé* (the elder) after he began writing on his own in 1909.

Having his roots in the Nineteenth Century's revolutionary scientific theories—Darwinism, etc.—his works of fiction and non-fiction show his fascination with science, including astronomy, anthropology, zoology, and sociology. He wrote distinguished science-fiction as well, and was renowned in France for his novels of the Cro-Magnon era, of which *The Giant Cat* (*Le Félin Géant*) is one of the best.

QUEST OF THE DAWN MAN

(Original title: The Giant Cat)

J. H. ROSNY

Translated from the French by
The Honorable Lady Whitehead

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INTRODUCTION
TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

This novel on its appearance at once hit the public fancy in France and ran through forty editions.

In the fabulous time of the Mammoth and the Great Lion of the Caves, some twenty thousand, or perhaps some hundred thousand years ago, races of men, today extinct, lived upon the earth.

Monsieur Rosny, basing his vivid narrative upon all the findings of science, has found a way to reconstruct imaginatively, in the form of a novel of the passions and combats of this primitive age, the life of these prehistoric times.

As with much of Kipling's work this book will cast its spell alike upon young and old.

H. S. K.

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PART I

AOUN, son of Urus, loved the subterranean country. There he angled for blind fish or livid cray fish, accompanied by Zouhr, son of Earth, the last of the Men-without-Shoulders, who had escaped the general massacre of his race by the Red Dwarfs.

For days together Aoun and Zouhr would walk along the borders of the river which flowed through the caverns. Often the bank became nothing but a narrow ledge; sometimes it was necessary to creep along the passages formed in the strata of porphyry, gneiss or basalt. Zouhr lit torches made of the wood of the turpentine tree, and the purple light was reflected back from the vaults of quartz above and the ever-flowing water below. Then they would stoop down to watch the pale creatures swimming in the stream, determined to find

outlets by which to continue their journey, until they came to the wall from which the waters gushed forth. There they halted for a long time. They would have liked to surmount that mysterious harrier, against which the Oulhamr had vainly hurled themselves during six springs and five summers.

Aoun, who was the son of Naoh, the son of the Leopard, belonged according to custom to his mother's brother, but he preferred Naoh, whose build he had inherited together with his untiring chest and his instincts. His hair fell in tangled masses like a stallion's mane, and his eyes were the colours of blue clay. His strength rendered him a formidable antagonist, but he even surpassed Naoh in sparing the lives of those he vanquished when they grovelled before him on the ground, and this was the reason that the Oulhamr mingled contempt with the admiration which his courage awoke in them. He hunted alone with Zouhr, whose feebleness rendered him of no account, but who was clever in discovering the stones from which fire could be obtained, and in preparing an inflammable substance from the pith of trees.

Zouhr's slight form resembled that of a lizard, his shoulders sloped away so rapidly that his arms appeared to spring directly from his trunk; this build had always been that of the Wahs, the Men-without-Shoulders, from the time of their first origin till they were annihilated by the Red Dwarfs. His intelligence was slow, but more subtle than that of the Oulhamr. It was doomed to perish with him and only to be reborn in other men after a lapse of millions of years.

Even more than Aoun, he delighted in the subterranean country; his fathers and the fathers of his fathers had always lived in countries full of water, of which a part disappeared into the hills or was lost in the mountains.

One morning they found themselves on the bank of a river. They had seen the scarlet of the sunrise change to a golden yellow light. Zouhr knew that he derived pleasure from watching the flow of the stream, Aoun experienced the same pleasure without being conscious of it. They directed their steps towards the country of the caverns. A mountain lay before them, high and inaccessible; its summit formed a long

wall. To the North and to the South, where the range was indefinitely prolonged, impassable masses arose. Aoun and Zouhr desired to scale the mountain; all the Oulhamr were anxious to do so.

They came from the North-West. They had been travelling for fifteen years towards the East and South. At first they had been driven back by floods, then, seeing that the land became ever more and more desirable and more rich in prey, they had grown accustomed to that endless journey.

They grew impatient of the obstacle which the mountain placed in their way. Aoun and Zouhr rested by the rushes under the black poplars. Enormous yet benevolent, three mammoths passed by on the opposite bank. Antelopes ran away into the distance and a rhinoceros moved close to a promontory. Obscure feelings were stirred in the son of Naoh; his spirit, more vagabond than that of the storks, longed to conquer the universe. Then he stood up and went towards the rising ground from which he could see the frowning opening whence the river gushed forth. Bats flew about in the shadows; an intoxicating feeling came over the young man and he said to Zouhr, "There must be other countries beyond the mountains."

Zouhr replied, "The river comes from the lands of the sun."

His sleepy eye, closely resembling the eye of a reptile, fixed itself upon Aoun's sparkling orbs. It was Zouhr who had interpreted the desire of the Oulhamr. A prey to the dreamy intelligence of the Men-without-Shoulders, which had caused the downfall of his race, he knew that streams and rivers have a source.

The blue shadow changed to black. Zouhr lighted one of the branches which he had brought with him. He could have walked easily without light, for he knew the country very well. They continued their way for a long time, traversing passages, surmounting crevasses, and towards evening they slept, after partaking of some roasted cray fish.

They were awakened by a shock, as if the very ground at their feet were rocking. They heard a sound as of stones rolling, then all was silent again. The anxiety this had

aroused was soon lulled, however, and they went to sleep again. But when they resumed their march they found their way impeded by masses of rock which had not been there before.

Then recollection surged up in Zouhr's mind, "The earth trembled," he said.

Aoun did not understand and did not try to do so. His thought was alert, intrepid and short, it concerned itself only with immediate difficulties or with living creatures. His impatience grew and caused him to hasten his pace so that before the end of the second day they had reached the wall of rock where the subterranean country ended.

Zouhr lighted a fresh turpentine torch so that he might see better; its light travelled along the gneiss and mingled the life of its flame with the mysterious life of the mineral.

The companions broke into loud exclamations, a large fissure had appeared in the wall.

"It is the earth," cried Zouhr.

Aoun advanced and leant over the opening. It was wider than a man's body. Although he knew the danger that lurked in newly-riven rocks, his impatience urged him on towards the crevasse. Walking was difficult, at every moment it was necessary either to climb or leap over the blocks. Zouhr followed the son of Urus; there was in him a kind of latent tenderness which caused him to share the other's perils, and changed his prudence to audacity.

The passage grew so narrow that they had to walk slantwise, and a heavy air seemed to emanate from the rock. Then a sharp projection made the passage narrower still, and as they could not stoop the adventure appeared to be at an end.

Drawing out his axe of jade, Aoun struck out angrily as he would have struck at an enemy—the projection tottered. The two warriors understood that it would be possible to detach it from the rock. Zouhr fixed his torch into a fissure and united his efforts to those of Aoun. The projection tottered still more; they pushed against it with all their strength. The gneiss cracked, stones rolled down, they heard a dull thud, and the passage was clear.

It grew larger, they were able to walk without difficulty, the air became pure, and they found themselves in a cavern. Much excited Aoun began to run, until he was stopped by the darkness, for Zouhr remained behind with the torch. The halt was a short one. The Oulhamr's impatience had infected the Man-without-Shoulders, and he advanced with long strides.

Soon a light as of dawn filtered through and grew clearer as by degrees the entrance to the cavern became visible and revealed a defile hollowed out between two walls of granite.

High up a band of sapphire blue sky appeared. "Aoun and Zouhr have scaled the mountain," cried the Son of Urus joyously.

He drew himself up to the full extent of his great height. An unconscious but profound pride vibrated through all his being; his nomad instincts carried him away with ungovernable ardour. Zouhr, whose nature was more secretive and dreamy, subordinated his emotions to those of his companion.

But that narrow defile, lost in the recesses of the mountains, bore too great a resemblance to the land of caverns; Aoun wanted to see the free earth again and would hardly take any repose. The defile appeared interminable. When they reached its extreme end the day was already dying, but their dream was accomplished.

Before them stretched vast pasture lands which seemed to blend with the distant firmament. The mountins rose sheer above it on either side, a formidable world made up of stones, silence and tempests. They appeared immovable, yet drops of water were forever undermining them, carrying them away and dissolving their substance. Aoun and Zouhr could hear the beating of their own hearts. Life with boundless possibilities lay before their eyes. It teemed in the fertile earth, and man's whole destiny was bound up with those black basalt cliffs, with the granite peaks, with the veins of porphyry, with the gorges where the torrents raged and with the gentle valleys where the stream murmured in tender tones: it hung also on the armies of fir trees, the legions of beeches, on the pas-

ture lands which had appeared amongst the rocky indentations, on the glaciers lost among the summits, on the deserted moraines. . . .

The sun was setting over a panorama of turret-like summits, cupolas and peaks; the forms of a few moufflon sheep appeared mysteriously silhouetted on the edge of an abyss, an old wolf was spying out the solitude from his vantage ground on a rock of gneiss, whilst a baldheaded eagle hovered slowly upon the edge of an amber-bordered cloud.

A new land called to Aoun's adventurous soul, and to the dreamy spirit of Zouhr, the last remaining Man-without-Shoulders.

THE SABRE-TOOTH

Aoun and Zohur walked for fourteen days. A powerful force forbade their returning to the Horde until they had discovered savannahs and forests in which the Oulhamrs would find such meat and plants in abundance as were necessary for the nourishment of human beings.

It is impossible to live permanently in the mountains. The climate there forces men to abandon them at the end of summer; the earth becomes green again there much later, when the plains are already covered with fresh grass or new leaves.

More than once evening was upon them before they had killed enough game or discovered sufficient roots to appease their hunger. They were going towards the East and the lands of the South. On the ninth day the beech trees became more numerous than the fir, then oaks and chestnut trees increased in their path. Aoun and Zouhr knew that they were nearing the plains. Beasts roamed about them in greater numbers; every evening flesh and roots were roasting at their fire, and the nomads slept under warmer stars.

On the fourteenth day they reached the end of the mountains. The plain stretched out interminably along the banks of a giant river. Standing on a declivity of a basaltic promontory, which rose out of the savannah, the two companions

gazed on the new country, which had never before been trodden by any of the race of the Oulhamrs or the Wahs. At their feet grew unknown trees: banyans, each of which seemed to form an arbour, palms with leaves like immense feathers; green oak trees crowned the hillsides, and bamboos reared their giant grasses beneath. Innumerable flowers studded the expanse with hidden joys; all expressed the fertile love and patient voluptuousness of the vegetable world, on which all life depends.

But it was the animal life which Aoun and Zouhr were especially watching. The beasts appeared and disappeared according to the nature of the soil, the height of the grasses, the rushes or the tree ferns, and the lie of the hills, the trees and bamboos. They could see troops of lithe antelopes racing away, horses and onagers advancing towards them and zebus feeding peacefully. Deer and gaurs were landing at a turn of the river; a horde of dholes surrounded an antelope; snakes were crawling cunningly among the grasses; the humped bodies of three camels stood out on an eminence; peacocks, pheasants and parrots appeared at the edge of the palm wood, while monkeys hid themselves among the branches and the hippopotami plunged into the river, where the crocodiles floated like logs. There would never be lack of meat each evening at the fires of the Oulhamr! The promise of a life full of abundance set the hearts of the nomads beating faster, and as by degrees they descended the promontory, the atmosphere became so warm that the stones seemed to burn under their feet.

They thought that they had only to cover a short distance to reach the plain, when suddenly a rocky peak arrested their progress.

The Oulhamr gave vent to a cry of rage, but the Wah said, "This land is full of pitfalls! Aoun and Zouhr have not enough spears. Here no man-devouring beast can touch us."

The silhouette of a lion appeared in the distance in the hollow of a hill.

Aoun replied, "Zouhr has said the right thing! We will

fashion many spears and clubs and javelins to bring down our game, and to conquer the man-eaters."

The shadows grew long upon the promontory; the light became like the pale hue of honey. Aoun and Zouhr bent their steps towards a young oak, from which they could obtain suitable material for their arms. They knew how to make javelins and clubs, how to work in horn and how to sharpen stones and harden wood by fire. Their hatchets had become dull, and they had not been able to renew their tools since they left the caverns. They had an impression that it would be wise to arm themselves powerfully, before they entered that alarming country.

They hewed off branches until the sun set over the distant landscape, like a vast red fire. Then they gathered together the horns, the bones and the stones, which they had brought from the mountains.

"Night is coming upon us," said Aoun. "We will work on when the light returns."

They had gathered some dry wood, and Zouhr began to make a fire with the aid of a marcasite stone and a flint, whilst his companion stuck a pointed stick into a leg of wild goat.

They sprang to their feet as a noise like something between a roar and the laugh of a hyena fell upon their ears. They saw a strange animal about five hundred cubits from the promontory. It had the shape of a leopard, its fur was red striped with black, and its eyes were large and more brilliant than those of the tiger. Four teeth, very long and sharp, crossed each other outside its jaw. Its whole form betokened swiftness.

Aoun and Zouhr realized that it belonged to the carnivorous race, but it was unlike any of the wild beasts that were found on the other side of the mountains. It did not appear dangerous to them. Aoun could overcome a beast of that size with a harpoon, a club or a spear. He was as strong and swift as Naoh the conqueror of the Hairy Men, the grey wolf and the tiger.

"Aoun does not fear the red beast," he cried.

A roar sharper and more strident than the first surprised the warriors.

"It's voice is greater than its body," said Zouhr, "its teeth are sharper than those of any other flesh eater."

"Aoun will fell it with a blow of his club."

The animal made a bound measuring twenty cubits, and stooping down, Aoun perceived another monster, a giant, which was trotting along at the base of the promontory. Its skin was naked, its legs were like young willow trunks, and its muzzle was enormous and stupid looking. It was a male hippopotamus in full strength. It tried to regain the river. But the sabre-tooth barred its way at every turn, and the hippopotamus came to a standsill, its gaping jaws uttering a growl.

"The animal is too small to overcome the hippopotamus," said Aoun. "The hippopotamus does not fear the lion."

Zouhr looked on without saying anything. An intense curiosity possessed the two men--all the passion for strife which lies dormant in man.

Suddenly the sabre-tooth made its spring. It alighted on the neck of the hippopotamus and held on to it with its sharp claws. The pachyderm, howling with pain, galloped towards the river. But the sharp teeth penetrated the leather-like skin, and lodged in the thick flesh beneath. An ever-widening wound appeared in the colossal neck and the sabre-tooth drank the red flood which flowed from it with sounds of joy and triumph.

At first the hippopotamus hastened his pace, he no longer howled, his energy was concentrated on regaining the river. There he would plunge into his native pastures and heal his wound, there he would find the joy of renewed life. His massive paws beat down the savannah, and despite the swaying body on his back, he still progressed as fast as a wild boar or an onager. The river was near, its damp smell raised the monster's courage. But the savage teeth were plunged in once more, a new wound began to open, the hippopotamus reeled. The short legs trembled, the rattle of death came from his

monstrous muzzle, and the relentless teeth of his assailant struck ever deeper.

Just as he had reached the margin of the rushes, the victim turned slowly round, he was seized with giddiness. . . . He drew one more hoarse breath and then the immense mass subsided.

The sabre-tooth reared himself on his lithe paws, gave forth a roar which caused the buffaloes to flee in the distance and settled himself to devour his yet living prey.

Aoun and Zouhr remained silent. They felt the approach of carnivorous night, an uncomfortable feeling shivered down their spines, they vaguely understood that this new world was a land belonging to another age, older than that in which the Oulhamr habitually roamed, a land where animals still existed which had lived in the time of the earliest men. The deep shadow of the past settled down with the twilight, and the age-old river flowed all red through the savannah.

THE FIRE IN THE NIGHT

It took them two days to fashion their arms. The spears were tipped with pointed flints or sharp teeth; they had each a harpoon whose point was of horn, two bows which could shoot arrows to a distance, and finally the oak had provided clubs, of which the heaviest, wielded by Aoun, was calculated to be dangerous for even the largest wild animals.

They climbed down from the point of the promontory into the plain, helping themselves with thongs cut from the skin of a deer. When they were once on the savannah the horde of the Oulhamr seemed immeasurably distant. Aoun was carried away by the strength of his youth and the spirit of conquest which is innate in human animals. He only needed to hide himself in the grass to surprise the wild goat or the spotted deer or the antelope. But he did not kill herb-cropping animals wastefully, for flesh is slow in growing and man must eat every day. When the horde had abundance of provisions, Naoh, the chief of the Oulhamr, forbade hunting.

Moreover the newness of it all astonished the companions. They watched the gavial, which was twelve ells long, with its long slender snout. They could see it floating in the river or lying in ambush on an islet or among the rushes by the bank. The dryopithecus [1] shewed his black hands and human body in the branches of the trees. Troops of wild cattle, strong as the urus and armed with horns which were capable of goring the chest of the tiger or crushing the lion, roamed at will. Black gayals displayed their massive stature and prominent withers.

A cheetah disappeared suddenly at the turn of a thicket; a pack of wolves, in pursuit of a nylghau, slunk along in a furtive and sinister manner, and the dholes, with their noses close to the ground, followed closely on a trail or raising their fine heads in the air howled in chorus. Sometimes a tapir rose up terrified from its lair, or fled into the mazes of the banyan trees.

Aoun and Zouhr, on the alert and with dilated nostrils, were on their guard against cobras, and in terror of the beasts of prey. These creatures, however, were sleeping in their dens or among the bamboos; only a red panther shewed himself in the hollow of a rock towards the middle of the day, and fixed his green eyes on the two men.

Aoun lifted his club and straightened his muscular form, but Zouhr, remembering the sabre-tooth, held back the arm of his companion.

"The son of Urus must not fight yet."

Aoun understood Zouhr's thought: he argued that as the sabre-tooth had shewn itself to be more powerful than the lion, even so this red panther might prove to have the strength of a tiger. Naoh, Faouhm and Goûn of the Dry Bones, teach prudence as much as courage: one must know one's enemies. All the same the Oulhamr did not at once lower his cudgel: he cried, "Aoun does not fear the panther!"

As the wild beast did not stir from the cavern, the men

[1] An extinct genus of long-armed apes, remains of which are found in the Miocene beds of the South of France.

resumed their way. They sought a place of retreat. In that torrid country, the night must teem with carnivorous animals; even near the fire, too many perils threatened the nomads. The Oulhamr had the custom and the art of home-making. They knew how to protect the mouths of caverns by the aid of boulders, boughs and trunks of trees; they could make shelters for themselves either in open ground or under overhanging rocks.

All day the companions found nothing, and towards evening they left the river bank. The first stars came out as they halted on a rising ground where only some sparse brushwood and thin grass grew. Protected on one side by a wall of slate they arranged their fire in a semicircle. They were to take turns to watch. Aoun was to be on guard first, because his hearing was sharpest and his sense of smell most subtle: for the early part of the night is the most dangerous.

A gentle breeze wafted the disagreeable odours of the beasts and the pleasant smell of the vegetable world towards him. The young Oulhamr's senses were aware of the lightest shades of sound, phosphorescence or effluvia.

First the jackals shewed themselves, furtive, uncertain and graceful. The fire at once attracted and alarmed them. They remained immovable for a time, then, gently pawing the ground, they drew near to the mystery. Their shadows lengthened behind them, their brilliant eyes became alive with red light, their pointed ears were stretched in all directions. They recoiled altogether at the slightest movement that Aoun made. The moment he moved his arm they fled, giving vent to faint yelps. Aoun was not afraid of them even when they came in great numbers, but their strong smell incommoded him, by rendering the emanations from the other wild beasts less distinct.

Not to waste his weapons he picked up some stones. At his first throw they dispersed. Then the dholes appeared, their numbers and their hunger making them audacious. They prowled in clusters or darted forward with growls, which passed from one to another as if they were talking among themselves. The fire brought them up short. They were as

curious as the jackals and sniffed the smell of the roast meat and of the two men. A confused supplication seemed to be blended with their covetousness.

When Aoun threw stones at them the advance guard drew back and heaped themselves together in a corner, while threatening howls proceeded from the semi-darkness. They rallied when they were out of reach and sent out scouts, who sought cunningly for openings. The spaces which separated the sides of the fire from the ridge seemed to them too narrow; they returned to them, however, sniffing all the time in an irritating manner. Sometimes they feigned an attack, or a group would gather behind a rock and howl there, in the hope that a sudden panic would yield up the meat to them.

Little by little the jackals had come back, more crafty than ever, but kept at a little distance from the dholes. They retreated before a dozen wolves who had appeared from the east, but who presently dispersed, leaving the place free for the hyenas. These animals trotted along in an exasperating way, with a convulsive motion of their sloping backs, giving vent at intervals to bursts of laughter like those of an old woman.

Two dwarf bats were circling round on their soft wings; higher up a roussette, whose wings were as wide as an eagle's spread, floated under the stars; near the fire the bewildered nocturnal insect world quivered in myriads, the gnats formed into humming columns and the foolish beetles fell among the glowing logs.

Two bearded monkeys' heads were peeping out from a banyan tree; a marsh owl moaned on a hillock and a hornbill thrust its enormous beak through the feathered leaves of a palm tree.

Aoun was beset by anxiety. He watched all those gaping jaws and sharp teeth, and those staring eyeballs, which shone in the fire-light like living carbuncles.

Death was hovering about him. There was enough energy assembled there to destroy fifty men. The dholes had the strength of the horde, the hyena's jaws were as strong as the tiger's: the tall wolves shewed their muscular necks, even the

jackals, with their pointed teeth, could have torn Aoun and Zouhr to pieces in the time it would take a branch to burn. The fire stupefied these staring animals; they were cunning but not audacious, and the difference of their species disunited their common covetousness.

They waited for some event to happen such as rewards those who watch and wait: and at intervals mutual hate threw them upon one an other. When the wolves howled the jackals took refuge in the shadows, but the dholes gave tongue together, and all fell back before the hyenas. These animals, who are but a slight menace to man, being averse to all risks and accustomed to prey on the dead or the defenceless remained there, held fast by the crowd around them and by the fascination of that strange light which emanated from the ground.

At last a leopard appeared and Aoun woke Zouhr up. The wild beast crouched before the dholes. His amber coloured eyes were riveted on the flames and on the tall forms of the two men.

Aoun exclaimed indignantly, "The son of Urus has killed three leopards."

The animal stretched out its paws with the long claws, and let its lithe flexible body lie at full length. It was of great height and more massively built than the spotted leopards which the Oulhamr were acquainted with. Its skin was loose over its muscles. It could easily have sprung over the fire and attained the ridge where the two men stood. It endeavoured anxiously to recognize what those two upright creatures were. Their smell and the shape of their bodies reminded it of the gibbon, but the gibbon was smaller and had not the same appearance. The red light shewed them to be taller than the gaur: their movements and the curious objects which they balanced at the end of their arms, awoke the leopard's prudence. Besides he was alone and these creatures were ready to face him.

Aoun shouted more loudly, his voice sounded like that of a powerful enemy. . . . The leopard crept towards the left, hesitated a moment before the empty space which separated

the fire from the ridge, then passed to one side and backwards. A stone struck him in the face. He gave vent to a howl of rage, but retreated. He crouched in a threatening attitude as if about to spring, then scratched the earth with his claws and swerved towards the river. He was followed by a party of jackals, the dholes and wolves gave signs of fatigue, and the hyenas roamed in ever increasing circles, and only appeared intermittently in the flickering light. . . .

Suddenly all the hordes were on the *qui vive,* all their nostrils sniffed the air towards the west, and the sharp ears were pricked. Short strident roars broke the silence and made the men on the ledge start. Then a sinuous body rose up in the shadow and alighted in the full blaze of the fire-light. The dholes had gone away, tense excitement kept the wolves immovable and caused their eyes to flame, the hyenas came back at a trot; and two civet cats mewed in the half light.

Aoun and Zouhr recognized that red fur and those terrible teeth. . . .

The beast crouched by the fire. He was hardly bigger than the leopard and not so large as the tallest hyenas, but all the other animals bowed before a mysterious power which emanated from his movements and his immense eyes.

Aoun and Zouhr held their weapons in readiness. The son of Urus had a harpoon in his right hand, his club was at his feet; Zouhr who was not so strong preferred the spears. They both considered the sabre-tooth was superior in strength to the tiger, and perhaps even as much to be feared as the enormous wild beast from which Naoh, Gaw and Nam had made their escape some time ago in the country of the Men-Devourers. They already knew that he could cover twenty ells at a single bound, a greater distance than that which separated him from the ridge. But the fire stopped him. The red tail lashed the earth; the thunderous voice resounded in volleys; the two men's muscles stiffened as if they had been made of granite. . . .

Aoun brandished his harpoon and took aim . . . the sabre-tooth leaping sideways deferred the combat, and Zouhr said

in a low voice, "Once he is struck the red brute will spring despite the fire . . ."

Although he was as skillful as Naoh himself, Aoun was not capable of inflicting a mortal wound on a wild beast twenty ells away. He took Zouhr's advice and waited.

The sabre-tooth stood in front of the blazing fire.

He came near to it until he was only fifteen ells from the warriors. They could see him better. His chest was covered with fur of a paler hue than that on the upper part of his body, his teeth shone like onyx stones, and when he turned his head towards the shade the fire of his eyes shone like glow-worms.

Two points of rock prevented him from making his spring, and also impeded the men in throwing their javelins or harpoon.

He must advance three ells. He prepared himself to do so; for the last time he gazed hard at his adversaries, while his bosom throbbed with ever increasing rage, for he foresaw the courage of the human race.

Suddenly a pandemonium broke out in the ranks of the dholes; the wolves were in a tumult, and the hyenas beat a retreat towards the banyan trees. By the light of the stars they could make out an enormous heaving mass. Soon the red blaze disclosed a heavy muzzle towards the end of which grew a horn longer than that of the buffalo. The skin was like the bark of old oak trees; wrinkled columns supported a body which was as heavy as that of six horses. Haughty, purblind and unobservant, agitated by some incoherent anger, the beast trotted along. All got out of his way; a wolf, whom panic had thrown on the rhinoceros' path, was crushed like a rat. Aoun knew that a lion or a cave-wolf would have suffered the same fate. It seemed as if even the fire would not stop the monster. But it did stop him. The colossal body swayed before the scarlet flames, the small eyes dilated, the horn menaced those around it . . .

Then the sabre-tooth appeared before the rhinoceros.

Stretched out so that he seemed like a snake, his chest flat on the earth, the carnivorous beast snarled without ceasing.

A vague recollection made the pachyderm uneasy but this quickly gave way to fury. On the steppes, in the jungle, far away on the moors, no life had been able to resist his weight; he had crushed everything which did not flee from him. His horn pointed towards the red beast, his heavy legs resumed their course. . . . He was like an avalanche. It would have needed a rock or a mammoth to stop him. Another two steps and the sabre-tooth would have been in shreds . . . but the sabre-tooth effaced himself.

Before he had time to turn the colossus rolled up to the banyan grove, and the red beast was upon his shoulders. It gave vent to a hoarse roar, dug in its four sets of claws and began its work. The artery which it knew and which had been known to its ancestors millions of years before, was there under a fold of the skin, which was thicker than the bark of ancient cedar trees, and as hard as the shell of the tortoise. It was impenetrable to the tiger's or the lion's teeth or to those of the giant feline of the caverns. Only *his* long incisive teeth knew how to force a passage. The skin and flesh were gashed open and a jet of blood gushed out, rising the height of an ell into the air. The immense beast tried to shake off its assailant, and being unable to accomplish this rolled upon the ground.

The sabre-tooth was not defeated. With growls of pleasure he bounded to one side and defied that strength, which was twenty times as great as his own. An unfailing instinct told him that the beast's life was ebbing away with that hot stream and that he only had to wait. Already the rhinoceros was staggering, the dholes, hyenas, jackals, and civet cats were approaching the antagonists, clamouring enviously.

The vanquished colossus would afford food for all of them for one day; the sabre-tooth purveyed more than any other wild beast for the parasitic hordes that escorted the great carnivora.

One more effort. The fierce horn charged the enemy, the muzzle dribbled and the voice became hoarse, despair beat at the heart of the powerless mass. . . . Then the end came. The hot flood ceased to flow; all energy was lost in the mystery of

a swoon, the fear of death was wiped out by death itself. The rhinoceros sank down like a rock, and the sabre-tooth enlarged the wound which had killed the monster, and devoured the yet warm flesh. Then the jackals licked up the blood from the ground, and the dholes, hyenas and wolves waited humbly till the red beast was satiated.

THE MEN AND THE RED BEAST

After the sabre-tooth's victory Aoun and Zouhr put fresh branches on the fire. Then Aoun lay down, guarded by his companion. The peril was past, that circle of hungry jaws which had threatened the two men, were now pressing round the rhinoceros. Zouhr could see the stars, which a little while ago touched the crests of the ebony trees, sinking towards the river. More timorous than Aoun, he felt himself strangely enveloped by the unknown, in that new land, where a wild beast hardly larger than a leopard destroyed huge pachyderms. . . .

The conqueror took a long time devouring his prey.

Either through caprice, or because he liked it, or in pursuance of an inherited habit, he tore away the skin in every direction, only remaining for a moment at each place. The more feeble animals, the jackals and the civet cats, slipped into the places he had left without interference from the victor, but he growled when the dholes, the wolves and above all the hyenas pressed too closely upon him.

The moon, which was in its last quarter, was rising on the opposite side of the river when the sabre-tooth left his prey. Then the wolves, the dholes and the hyenas threw themselves frantically upon it. It seemed as if they would exterminate each other: there were only a few inches between their tusks, and an immense chorus of howls went up to the stars. . . . But a truce was made in the very heart of the tumult; the wolves took possession of the shoulders and chest, the hyenas tore at the vitals, the dholes flung themselves on the back

and the hindquarters. The jackals and civet cats knew their place and got away.

For a moment the sabre-tooth turned his head towards the swarming mass of jaws. The blood was dripping from his lips, which he licked unconcernedly; his jaws were heavy with the effort of devouring, his eyelids half closed. He awoke with a start, and made a few steps towards the fire and towards that human being who irritated his instincts; then, confident in his own unvanquished strength, he laid himself down on the savannah and went to sleep.

Zouhr observed him with suspicion. He considered whether he ought not to take advantage of the beast's slumbers to make his escape, but thinking that no doubt the animal would sleep for a long time he did not arouse Aoun. The moon grew smaller as she rose above the hills, making the starlight seem pale. The mass of rhinoceros flesh grew smaller among the swarming mouths; the dawn was near when the son of the Men-without-Shoulders touched Aoun's chest:

"There is no more wood," he said as his companion sat upright . . . "the fire is low . . . the red beast is asleep. Aoun and Zouhr must leave this place."

The tall Oulhamr considered the scene. He saw the motionless sabre-tooth lying two hundred ells off their encampment. A sudden hate seized him. He again saw the brute roaring before the flames, he saw the cruel teeth plunged into the skin of the colossal herbivore: the whole race of man and of those by whom he lives was threatened by that unfamiliar form.

"Could not Aoun kill the beast in its sleep?" he asked.

"It will awaken," replied the other, "it would be better to pass to the other side of the rock."

The son of Urus hesitated. The force which urged him to fight was one of the primary instincts of his species. Neither Faouhm nor Naoh would have suffered a wild beast of that size to dog his steps in order to devour him.

"Naoh killed the tigress and the grey wolf," said the Oulhamr sombrely.

"The tigress and the grey wolf would have fled before the rhinoceros."

That reply appeased the warrior. He gathered together his harpoon and bow and spears, and took his club in his hand. After a last look at the beast they cleared the ridge and descended from the rock. They were dejected, having slept badly, and they thought of their horde on the other side of the mountains.

Day was about to break, the sunrise was pale, and the carnivorous voices were silent on the river bank; the leaves and flowers seemed more motionless than usual. . . .

A hoarse sound broke the stillness. Aoun and Zouhr turned round and beheld the sabre-tooth. Some trifling movement, or simply the two men's departure, had awakened him; instinct caused him to follow the two creatures who had surprised his confused mentality.

"Aoun should have fought the red beast when it was asleep!" said the Oulhamr, freeing his harpoon.

A feeling of sharp regret stabbed at his heart. The Wah hung his head, feeling that his prudence had been ill-timed, and he looked humbly at Aoun. But Aoun bore no malice; his great chest swelled at the thought of the combat, and Zouhr was like a part of himself. First they stood shoulder to shoulder, combining their strength. Aoun shouted his war-cry.

"The son of Urus and Zouhr will spear the red beast and crush its bones!"

The sabre-tooth did not hurry himself. When the human beings stopped, he stopped too; he watched them make ready their bows and javelins and stretch out their limbs in a curious manner. As before, their articulated shouts surprised him: he began to move along a parallel track which did not bring him nearer to them.

"The red animal is afraid of man," shrieked Aoun, and he brandished his harpoon and club together.

A prolonged roar answered him, the sabre-tooth made two colossal bounds. Before he could spring for the third time Aoun and Zouhr's bows had come into action. Struck by arrows in the neck and in the body the wild beast threw him-

self upon the men in a frenzy. The zon of Urus threw a harpoon which lodged in his ribs, Zouhr's weapon flayed his hard skull. . . . The beast was upon them.

In one bound it threw Zouhr to the ground and sunk its fangs in his chest. Aoun attacked it with his club. The oaken bludgeon struck horizontally and only met thin air; the sabre-tooth had drawn back. . . . The Oulhamr and the beast stood face to face. He avoided the first attack by a leap to one side, he repulsed the second by a whirl of his club which grazed the brute's shoulder. An irresistible mass threw him to the ground and itself fell headlong, overthrown by its own impetus. The man found himself kneeling on one knee at the moment when the sabre-tooth came back to the charge. The fainting Zouhr flung his axe, while Aoun brought down his club with both hands. It resounded on the massive head, and the wild beast began to turn round and round as if he had become blind. A second blow paralyzed his neck. Then Aoun shattered his ribs, broke his legs, and crushed his jaws. The muscles continued to quiver for a long time, and the heart, which had been laid bare, continued to beat; it required two thrusts with a spear to finish its agony, and Zouhr sighed in a hoarse and feeble voice,

"Aoun has killed the red beast. . . . Aoun is stronger than Faouhm. . . . Aoun is as strong as Naoh, who won the secret of fire in the country of the Devourers-of-Men!"

The Oulhamr was intoxicated by his companion's words, pride dilated his nostrils, the sadness which had made his bones so heavy when he fled in the night had left him; his whole being was triumphantly elated by adventure, and turning towards the purple dawn he felt a passionate love for the unknown land that lay before him. Zouhr continued to stammer "The son of Urus will be a chief among men!"

Then he uttered a cry, his face became the colour of clay and he fainted. Aoun, seeing the blood flowing from the breast of the wounded man, was as concerned as if it had been his own, and the still face terrified him. The time they had lived together rose up before him in chaotic scenes. He saw again the sylvan solitudes, the brushwood, the marshes

and the rivers, where their energies had joined, where each was for the other a living weapon. But Aoun gathered together laves and herbs, crushed them with stones, and applied them to the wounds of his companion, and Zouhr opened his eyes. At first he was surprised to find himself lying there, then his eyes sought for the fire, then he remembered and repeated the words which had preceded his fainting fit, "Aoun will be a chief among men!"

Becoming conscious of his feebleness he wailed, "The red beast has pierced Zouhr's chest . . ."

Aoun continued to dress his wounds while the sun rose in its grandeur beyond the river. The wild beasts of the night had disappeared. Some entellus monkeys were making the branches move; the white-headed crows were hovering over the carcase of the rhinoceros, two vultures soared in the breeze, and the herbivores rose up in their masses. The hour of peril had passed for Wah and the Oulhamr; the great destroyers slept in their dens or in the jungle.

But the day itself is an enemy when the light is too strong and the earth is roasted with heat. Zouhr must be carried into the shade. Like all the Oulhamrs, Aoun had an instinct for caverns. He scurtinized the landscape in the hope of discovering some rocks, but he could only see steppes and brushwood, a few palm groves, the clumps of banyan trees and clusters of ebony or bamboo.

Then, having secured the leaves and herbs on his companion's chest, he took him on his back and started to walk. The journey was a hard one, because he had also to carry the weapons, but Aoun had inherited the strength of Faouhm, Naoh, and the Hairy Men. He walked for a long time, obstinately fighting his fatigue. Frequently he laid Zouhr down in the shade and without losing sight of him mounted a knoll or a boulder and surveyed the landscape.

The morning was passing, the heat became intolerable, and still no line of rocks revealed itself to him.

"Zouhr is thirsty," said the Man-without-Shoulders, who was shivering with fever.

The son of Urus directed his steps towards the river. At

this sweltering time of day, only a few crocodiles were to be seen spreading their scaly bodies on an island, or some hippopotami would appear for a moment above the surface of the yellow water.

The river rolled on into the far distance. Its fertile waters had given birth to age-old forests, perennial grasses, and animals without number. Father of life, it had life's untiring energy; it hurried forward its hordes of waves over rapids and cataracts.

Aoun fetched some water in the hollow of his hands and gave the wounded man drink. He asked anxiously, "Does Zouhr suffer?"

"Zouhr is very weak! Zouhr would like to sleep."

Aoun's muscular hand was laid lightly on his companion's head, "Aoun will make a shelter" he said.

The Oulhamrs knew how to protect themselves in the forest by an arrangement of interlacing branches. Aoun set himself to look for creepers, which he cut with his hatchet, and having chosen three palm trees which grew on a little eminence, he cut notches in their stems and interlaced the flexible stalks from one trunk to the other. This formed a triangular enclosure, the lattice-work sides of which offered a supple but solid resistance. The son of Urus worked hard, and the shadows had grown long on the river before he took any rest. It was necessary that the shelter should be covered with creepers sufficiently strong to resist the weight of a wild beast until his stomach should be slit or his heart pierced by the point of a spear.

Zouhr's fever continued to run high; green lights traversed his pupils; he dozed at intervals and woke up with a start, muttering incoherent words. Still he watched Aoun's work attentively, and gave him advice, for the Men-without-Shoulders were more ingenious constructors than the Oulhamrs or than any other men.

Before resuming his work Aoun ate some of the meat which had been roasted the previous day. Then he collected some thick creepers which made a roof for the refuge, and pre-

pared two great branches which were intended to close the opening.

The sun was approaching the crest of the highest ebony trees when the men took refuge in their hut. It dominated the surrounding country. The river could be distinctly seen through the lattice work, three hundred ells away.

It was the hour of Life. The monstrous hippopotami came up from their submerged pastures and clambered on to the islands. A long troop of wild cattle were drinking on the other bank. A file of Gangetic dolphins, with pointed snouts, could be seen parting the water. A crocodile with two crests appeared out of the rushes and shut his jaws on the slim neck of a chikara. The graceful creature struggled with death in the fearsome jaws, which gradually decapitated it. Rhesus monkeys were distractedly agitating their miniature human bodies among the branches, while pheasants of emerald, sapphire and golden hues alighted among the rushes, and a snowy flight of egrets fluttered on the flowered islands. At times, seized with panic, a horde of hylghau or axis would pass, fleeing before a pack of dholes or a couple of cheetahs. Then some horses appeared, wild-eyed, anxious and tumultuous creatures, whose prudence kept all their muscles tense. They came on with sudden prancings which swayed the whole troop, pricking their nervous ears—terrified at every noise. A string of gayals gravely skirted a little forest of bamboos.

Suddenly a loud roar was heard and five lions bounded towards the river. Solitude resulted. The broad-chested beasts caused the herbivores to vanish into space. Only the crocodile who had torn off its victim's head had not fled. It was impossible to say whether it scented danger. Its body, covered with thick scales, measured twelve ells; it was as broad as a log, and its glassy eyes and stupid head seemed an uncouth mixture of animal and mineral. A confused instinct, however, impelled its huge jaws towards the new-comers. It hesitated—then, seizing its prey by the middle of the body with its long rows of teeth, it plunged among the lotuses.

Two of the lions had manes. They were thickset males,

whose heads were like blocks of shale, and though heavy in repose they could bound twenty ells at a time when hunting. The lionesses were not so tall, but they were longer and more lithe, and appeared to be more cunning. All of them had large yellow eyes, which looked straight before them like the eyes of man.

They watched the stampede of the magnificent flocks from afar, and filled with disappointment halted to growl and roar. The sound of the male lions' tremendous voice travelled over the surface of the river and made even the dolphins tremble. Panic was rife amongst the palm groves, the rushes and the banyan trees; it reached to the little landing bays, the promontories, and onward to the confluence of the stream and the river. The monkeys chattered frenziedly among the branches.

When the carnivores had given vent to their anger they continued their way. The males sniffed the faint breeze, the more nervous lionesses stretched their muzzles towards the earth. One of them winded the men. She advanced crouching towards the hut, half hidden by the high grasses; the other two females followed her while the male lions waited.

Aoun watched the brutes come towards him. Each of them had five times the strength of a man; their claws were sharper than arrow heads, and their teeth were more efficacious than harpoons. He realized his weakness and the horror of being alone, and he regretted having left the country where his kind had numerical strength in their favour.

Zouhr lifted up his head; in his wounded breast fear mingled with pain and regret that he was unable to fight.

The first lioness was now close to them. She could not get a good view of the singular animals sheltered by the creepers, so she circled warily round the enclosure. Now that she was so close to him the son of Urus was no longer afraid; the blood of the warriors who knew how to die under fierce claws without ceasing to fight, coursed tumultuously through his veins; his eyes glowed as fiercely as the lioness', and brandishing an axe, he shouted from his deep chest the defiance of the human, "Aoun will scatter abroad the lions' vitals!"

But Zouhr said to him, "Let the son of Urus be prudent! Lions do not fear death when once their blood is up. You must smite him on the nostrils while you shout your war-cry!"

Aoun realized the Wah's wisdom; it was greater even than that of Goun of the Dry Bones. Craft veiled the light in his eyes.

Motionless now, the lioness tried to see the being distinctly from which that menacing voice proceeded. First one of the lions roared, then the other: Aoun responded mightily; all five brutes were now in front of the creeper covered arbour. They were aware of the superiority of their strength and of their numbers, and yet they delayed the attack because their prey defied them and remained hidden.

It was the youngest lioness who attempted to force her way through. She came quite close, sniffed and gave a blow with her claws. The creeper yielded but did not break, while the blunt end of a harpoon struck hard against her nostrils: she leapt back with a mew of rage and pain, her companions surveying her with anxious surprise. There was a pause. The five motionless lions seemed no longer to be thinking of the men. Then one of the males snarled, and with a terrific bound the tawny mass landed on the creeper roof, which sagged.

Aoun had stooped down. He waited till he could reach the beast's muzzle; then he succeeded in inflicting three blows on its nostrils. Mad with pain the animal rolled about as if it were blinded and finally fell back to the ground and crawled away.

The son of Urus threatened, "If another lion bounds on to the men's heads Aoun will tear out his eyes."

But the lions remained pensive. Those who had not attacked retreated like the others. The hidden human beings appeared more enigmatical to them than ever, and altogether terrible. Neither in their way of fighting nor in their voices did they in the least resemble the prey which the lions were accustomed to attack in their ambushes or at the drinking places. The blows which they dealt were strangely intolerable.

The lions were afraid to approach the hut, but tenacious rancour kept them on the watch. Couched among the tall grasses or under the arches of a banyan tree, they waited with their peculiar nonchalant and terrible patience. From time to time one or other of them would go down to the river to drink, and the herbivores were already reappearing in the distance.

Birds teemed. The pale bodies and black heads of the ibis could be seen outlined against the hollow of the bays, the marabous danced ridiculously on the islands, the cormorants made sudden dives, a flotilla of teal passed furtively, cranes flew noisily over a band of white-headed crows, while the parrots hidden among the palm trees made a deafening clamour. . . .

Slowly an ever increasing sound arose in the west. One of the lions bent his head to listen to it, then a lioness sat up quivering. They all growled; the thunderous roar of the males seemed to tear the air.

Aoun listened in his turn; he thought he heard the tramp of a herd, but his attention always came back to the carnivora. Their excitement increased, they assembled by the hut and began to attack it all together. Aoun's voice stopped them; those who had been struck on the nostrils drew back; a reverberation rose up from the depths of the earth.

Then the son of Urus realized that an immense herd was advancing towards the river. He thought of the aurochs which pastured on the plains beyond the mountains, then of the mammoths with whom Naoh had made an alliance, in the land of the Devourers-of-Men.

A sound of trumpeting was heard.

"It is the mammoths!" declared Aoun.

Despite the fever which made him shiver, Zouhr listened attentively.

"Yes, it is the mammoths," he repeated, but with less conviction.

The lions had all risen. For a moment their massive heads were bent towards the west, then with slow steps they went

down wind, and their tawny bodies were lost in the brushwood.

Aoun was not afraid of the mammoths. They crush neither men nor grass-eaters, not even wolves or leopards; it is only necessary to remain motionless when they pass, and to keep silence. But would they not be irritated to find men hidden in this bower of creepers? With a single blow one of these colossi could break through the enclosure and annihilate the son of Urus.

"Must Aoun and Zouhr leave the creeper cavern?" asked the Oulhamr.

"Yes," replied the Man-without-Shoulders.

Then Aoun moved the creepers arranged over the opening, crawled out on to the plain and helped Zouhr to follow him. Trees crashed. In the distance massive forms, grey in colour like clay, became visible. Trunks stood out at the end of their heads, which were like rocks. The herd formed into three groups, preceded by six colossal males. They pounded the earth, crushed the cannas, and pierced the curtains of the banyan trees. Their skin was like the bark of old cedar trees, their legs were as thick as Aoun's body, their bodies like the bodies of ten aurochs.

The Oulhamr said, "They have no manes, their tusks are almost straight, they are larger than the largest mammoths!"

"They are not mammoths!" said the Man-without-Shoulders. "They are the fathers of mammoths!"

For the Men-without-Shoulders, knowing their own feebleness, believed in the superior strength of ancestral life.

Aoun felt his insignificance much more than when he was in the presence of the lions. He felt himself as defenseless as an ibis confronted with crocodiles. His pride was annihilated; motionless, stooping over his wounded comrade, he waited.

The advance guard was near. The six leaders approached the refuge; their brown eyes never ceased gazing at Aoun, but they shewed no distrust, perhaps they knew human beings.

Death or life—the decision was near; if the leaders did not turn aside, it would require but ten steps before the

men were pounded into the earth like wood-lice, and the creeper enclosure swept away. Aoun gazed fixedly at the most powerful male elephant. Fifteen ells high, his trunk would have stifled a buffalo as easily as a python would have strangled an axis.

He stopped in front of the men. As it was he who gave the line of march all the other leaders imitated him, and an army of giants spread out in a vast heaving curve. His club at his feet, with head bent low, Aoun accepted his fate.

At last the chief trumpeted, and turned towards the right of the enclosure.

All followed. Each full-grown elephant, because those ahead of him had stepped aside, stepped aside in his turn; none, not even the youngest ones, touched the men or their refuge. The earth trembled for a long time. The grass had become a green pulp, the reeds and lotus perished under the tread of the advance guard, the hippopotami had fled; a crocodile twenty ells long, had been thrown aside like a frog, and on a rising ground the five lions could be seen lifting their roaring muzzles towards the red sun.

Very soon the whole herd had plunged into the river. The waves ebbed, the trunks sucked up the water and threw it back in douches, then these moving rocks submerged themselves: the monstrous heads and huge spines seemed like erratic blocks washed down from the mountains with the glaciers, the torrents, and the avalanches.

"Naoh made an alliance with the mammoths," murmured Aoun. "Could not the son of Urus make an alliance with the ancestors of the mammoths?"

The day was dying, the lions disappeared from the rising ground; the ponderous gaurs and the graceful axis, hastened towards their nocturnal shelters. Then the sun touched the hills beyond the further bank of the river, and the carnivores awoke in their lairs. Aoun went into the creeper hut and dragged the Man-without-Shoulders in after him.

THE PYTHON

Three days passed: the lions had not returned and the elephants had disappeared down the river. Under the rays of the terrible sun and with the help of the nocturnal vapours, the crushed grasses and shrubs were busy remaking their green flesh. Inexhaustible life, that outstripped all the hunger of the herbivores, sprang up from the damp soil and spread itself upon the waters of the inlets. Prey was so abundant that Aoun had only to throw a javelin or dart a harpoon each day to ensure their subsistence. Naoh's spirit was upon him, forbidding him to kill more than was necessary to stay his hunger.

His companion's shivering fits and delirium troubled Aoun for a long time. But his wounds were healing and the green light was leaving his eyes. On the fourth day they were joyful. The shade of the creepers and palm trees made a pleasant freshness. Seated at the entrance of their shelter, the Oulhamr and the Man-without-Shoulders enjoyed a sense of complete repose and the luxury of abundance. The sight of the teeming animal life around moved them deeply, for it gave promise that they would not starve, and there is satisfaction in beholding the world's strength. Purple herons swooped down on the water-chestnuts, two black storks got up on the opposite bank of the river, a marabou danced in a strange and unmeaning manner, and the pendant legs of a flight of yellow-headed cranes were visible, while black-footed geese with thick wattles and scarlet ibis were seeking adventures among the lotus.

A python emerged from the mud and climbed on the bank, unfolding his lithe body, as thick as a man's and five times as long. The wanderers gazed with disgust at the loathsome beast, which was unknown to the Oulhamrs. Although it was capable of the speed of a wild boar, it progressed heavily and uncertainly, still numbed by sleep and more suited to the night than to the day.

Aoun and Zouhr had taken refuge in the creeper hut. No previous experience enabled them to judge the strength of the reptile, or to know whether its fangs were poisonous, like those of the serpents which they had met in western countries. It might be as strong as a tiger or as venomous as a viper. . . .

Little by little it approached the enclosure. Aoun kept his club and spear in readiness but did not think of shouting his war-cry. He was conscious of life which resembled his own in the great brutes, but this long slimy body without any limbs, the head which was too small in proportion—the motionless eyes, seemed stranger to him than grubs and earth-worms.

When the python was close to the refuge it reared itself up and opened its flat jaws.

"Should I strike now?" asked the son of Urus.

Zouhr hesitated: in his country the Men-without-Shoulders killed serpents by crushing their skulls, but what were the serpents he knew in comparison to this huge monster?

"Zouhr does not know," he replied. "He would not strike until the beast attacks the hut."

Its head had reached the creepers and was seeking for an opening. Aoun pricked its muzzle with the point of a spear. The python bounded back with a loud hissing noise, twisted itself dizzily together and started off to return to the river. At the same moment a young antelope crossed the plain. Either the reptile saw it or it gave way to its natural indolence: it became motionless. The antelope lifted up its humped forehead, the smell of man made it anxious and it left the neighbourhood of the refuge. Then only did it see the python: a trembling seized its limbs, its eyes became fixed on the cold eyes before it, it was paralyzed. The scene was short. The antelope tried to escape, but the long soft body flung forward with the rapidity of a panther. The antelope tripped over a stone and was knocked down by the attack of the reptile. It recovered itself before the python could envelop it and fled at random. This brought it to the edge of a creek, where the sinuous brute again barred its way.

Shivering with terror the antelope gazed into the distance.

Life was there, the life of the vegetable world through which its agile body leaped so joyously. Two successful bounds and it would be saved. It tried to pass between the bank and the serpent, then in despair it leapt the obstacle. It was struck by a giant blow, the tail of the python was lashed round its panting body, and the little creature, feeling the approach of death, bleated dismally . . . In another instant the graceful form was struggling in the grasp of the long ice-cold muscles; then its moans were changed to the death-rattle, and hanging its head, vanquished, with mouth open and tongue lolling out, it drew its last breath.

This scene awoke a strange hate in Aoun. A leopard, wolves or a hippopotamus might have killed the antelope without his feeling any emotion, but the victory of this cold-blooded creature seemed to menace even human beings. Twice the warrior stooped down to leave the refuge, but Zouhr held him back.

"The son of Urus has abundance of meat, what will become of us if he gets wounded?"

Aoun yielded, he did not understand his own anger; it seemed to him like the fever of a wound. And what did he know of the great serpent's strength? One blow of its tail had felled the antelope and would certainly overthrow a man.

He remained moody, however, and the creeper hut became unbearable to him.

"Aoun and Zouhr cannot live here," he cried, when the python had carried off its prey beyond the rushes. "The Oulhamrs need a cavern. . . ."

"Zouhr will soon be able to get up," his companion replied.

PART II

THE GIANT FELINE

Two more days passed. Zouhr was weak, but he could stand up; his young blood rapidly healed his wounds. Aoun could leave the hut for longer periods and explore down the river. Although he had travelled fifteen thousand ells, he had found no place to shelter them. Between their present habitation and the furthest point he had explored, rocks rose near the bank, but their fissures were too narrow to shelter men or even dholes. Zouhr thought of digging a ditch, as was the custom of the Men-without-Shoulders, but it was slow work, and the Oulhamrs inhabited such lairs with reluctance. He contented himself with strengthening the creeper enclosure. More clever than Aoun in the art of construction, he made it impenetrable for wild beasts; but the elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami or a herd of cattle would have been able to trample it down; and it had the disadvantage of attracting the prowling beasts of the brushwood.

More days passed. The end of spring was near, fierce heat beat down upon the river, fever-breeding vapours rose up under the starlight and shrouded the landscape long after day had dawned. One morning Zouhr realized that he had regained sufficient strength to continue the journey. He said to his companion, who was impatiently looking at the vegetable growth which luxuriated round their refuge with invincible strength. "The son of Earth can follow Aoun."

The Oulhamr stood up joyfully; the wounded man was like a creeper twined round his shoulders, hindering his every movement.

Mist still hung about the river; young hippopotami grunted as they played near the inlet; birds were pursuing their active lives. Aoun and Zouhr went down stream. As the sun rose higher they sought for shade; they were obliged to be careful not to stumble against the snakes that awoke with the heat, and to detect the smell of carnivorous animals asleep in the dusk of the thickets. In the middle of the day they rested under some turpentine trees. They had dried meat, roots and mushrooms, which they roasted over a fire made of sticks. The mere smell of the hot meat made Aoun laugh; he devoured it with the joyful haste of a young wolf, while Zouhr lingered over his meal and savoured every morsel. A great numbness came over all the creatures. Only the distant voice of the waters and the humming of insects was to be heard; war was suspended; the two men gave themselves up to the sweetness of life, the strength of their youth and the intoxicating effect of the pictures which rose up before their minds, like the water-chestnuts on the river.

Zouhr who was still weak became drowsy, while the son of Urus watched; his watch resembled sleep, moved only by the echoes of instinct, but his senses were awake to every variation of his surroundings.

They resumed their journey when the shadows began to grow long on the plain, and did not halt till twilight was upon them. The next day and the day after they continued in the same manner. They had to pass through a jungle, skirt the marshes, swim a river, and push their way through brushwood. Zouhr's feebleness had disappeared: he patiently followed his broad-chested companion. There was never any question of a quarrel or rancour between them; each one found in the other the resources which were lacking in himself. Aoun's strength reassured Zouhr and astonished him; Aoun valued Zohr's cunning and the secrets which he held from the Men-without-Shoulders.

On the morning of the ninth day, rocks appeared almost on

the bank of the river. They formed a chain which extended for more than a thousand steps, broken by two fissures; the highest ones rose to more than three hundred ells, and extended backward to the border of the jungle; the crevices sheltered eagles and falcons.

The son of Urus gave a cry of joy at the sight, for he inherited from his ancestors the love of rocks, especially when they were near to a stream. Zouhr examined the site more calmly. They discovered several overhanging masses of rock, like those under which the horde were accustomed to shelter themselves in default of caves. But the shelter which was adequate for a band strong in numbers was insufficient for two warriors alone. They stopped frequently and carefully examined the walls of basalt, knowing that a small opening may lead to a spacious cavern.

At last Aoun's sharp eyes discerned a fissure as high as a man; it was only two hand-breadths wide at the base, but it grew larger higher up. In order to reach it they had to lift themselves on to a horizontal projection, then to climb to a ledge where three men could stand upright.

The warriors easily reached the projection, but in order to get to the ledge of rock Aoun had to climb on Zouhr's shoulders. Then the Oulhamr penetrated into the fissure, but not straight: he had to crawl along sideways for a distance of five ells. . . . The passage then grew larger, and the wanderer found himself in a low but spacious cavern. He went slowly along it, until he was stopped by a depression, a rapid declivity which ended in gloom. Before pursuing his exploration Aoun preferred to hoist Zouhr on to the ledge. He crawled out again sideways as he had gone in.

"The cave is big, perhaps it has two entrances," he said, "Aoun has not seen the end of it yet."

Stooping down he stretched out a spear. Zouhr managed to seize the end of it and pulled himself up along the face of the rock, his feet clinging to the unevenness of the surface, thus facilitating his efforts and those of his companion. As Zouhr climbed up, Aoun gradually straightened himself and backed towards the fissure.

When Zouhr had reached the ledge the Oulhamr conducted him to the cavern and led him down the declivity. The increasing darkness made them go more slowly, an odour of wild beasts made them anxious, and they were thinking of going back when a light broke through.

"There is another way out," murmured Zouhr.

Aoun shook his head deprecatingly, but without stopping. The slope became more gradual, the light, though still faint, grew stronger. It came from a very long zig-zag crack, which was too narrow to admit the passage of the two men. . . . Bats flew out with shrill cries.

"Aoun and Zouhr are the masters of the cave," murmured the son of Urus.

Zouhr put his head through the crevice; a roar resounded, a giant *beast* rose up from a spacious lair. It was impossible to say whether it most resembled a tiger or a lion. It had a black mane and its chest was as broad as that of a gaur; its body was long and sinuous though thick set; it was of taller stature and its muscles were thicker than those of all the other carnivora. Its immense eyes seemed to shoot out yellow or green fire according to the play of the shadows.

"It is the lion of the rocks!" whispered Zouhr.

The beast, taking its stand against the crevice, lashed its sides with its shaggy tail.

Aoun gazed at it in his turn and said, "It is the tiger from the country of the Kzamms."

He had seized his spear and prepared to fling it through the fissure; he opened his mouth to shout his war-cry. Zouhr stayed his uplifted arm:

"Aoun cannot strike hard enough through the fissure to kill the lion of the rocks, and it would be difficult for him to reach it at all."

He pointed out projections which would turn aside or arrest the course of the weapon. The Oulhamr understood the danger there would be in uselessly irritating the beast. It might leave its lair and seek its aggressors. Besides it was already becoming passive again, and it was unlikely it would hunt the next night, for abundant remains of a wild ass were

bleeding on the ground, which was covered with the skeletons of previous kills.

"Perhaps Aoun and Zouhr will be able to make a trap for him," murmured the Wah.

For a moment longer they could hear the hard breathing of the wild beast, then he stretched himself carelessly among the dry bones. He knew no fear, so his fury gradually subsided. No beast was audacious enough to attack him, unless it were the purblind rhinoceros. The elephant did not fear him, but also did not attack him; the leaders of the gayals, the gaurs and the buffaloes, who defend their herds from the tiger and the lion, quailed before him; his strength exceeded that of all other carnivores.

The animals whom he now smelt on the other side of the wall of basalt reminded him of the odour of the gibbons, the rhesus and the entellus monkeys, all weakly creatures that he could crush with a single blow of his claws.

Aoun and Zouhr returned towards the top of the cavern. There was no immediate danger and they did not look far ahead, but the mere neighbourhood of the feline animal was alarming to them. Although its home was on the other side of the rocks, and no doubt it hardly ever hunted in the daytime, some chance might put it on their track. Therefore this refuge, which had seemed so secure, accessible as it was only to men, vampires and birds, was rendered unsafe.

They resolved, however, not to leave it until they should have discovered another.

The son of Urus said, "Aoun and Zouhr will not go out until the Kzamms tiger is asleep in its lair."

"The lion of the rocks is too heavy to climb trees," Zouhr added, "There are branches everywhere in which we can hide ourselves."

They were not afraid of being surprised while they were hunting. Aoun's sense of smell was as keen as that of the jackals, and Zouhr's cunning was ever on the alert.

For several days their life remained tranquil. Zouhr, guided by the instinct of his race, brought in provisions of mushrooms and roots; Aoun provided meat and collected wood for the

fire. They lit it on the ledge and in the evening it glowed with a red light, surprising alike the prowlers on the plain, and the vampires, owls and eagles of the chain of rocks.

There was abundance of food: the men ate joyfully, safe from the beasts who watched them from below, and not deigning to notice the rapacious birds that hovered over their heads. Zouhr went down several times each day to spy out the den. The wild beast no longer displayed anger, or even impatience. The smell of the young warrior had become familiar to it and did not even disturb its sleep. If it was not sleeping it would sometimes stand up against the crevice and its fiery eyes would vaguely scan the height and face of the human being.

After some time the son of Earth said to him, "Aoun and Zouhr are not enemies of the rock lion."

The brute, surprised by the sound of an articulate voice growled and tore at the rock with its claws.

"The lion of the rocks is stronger than Zouhr," continued the warrior . . ." but Zouhr is cunning . . . If the lion of the rocks, the son of Earth and the son of Urus made an alliance, no prey could escape them."

He spoke in this way without any real hope, and only because of old memories which stirred in him. Often the Men-without-Shoulders had lived side by side with the wild beasts, taking part in their hunting, and Naoh, son of the Leopard, of the Oulhamr tribe, had made an alliance with the mammoths. Descended from a race which had been declining for generations, Zouhr often lost himself in dreams. He had many more recollections than his companions, and these recollections, fired by his youth, took on strange shapes on days when he was safe from peril and want.

It was the first time that he had found himself in the constant vicinity of a dangerous animal. On the steppes and in the forest animals were inaccessible or menacing. Besides, when Zouhr thought of imitating Naoh or any of his ancestors, Aoun and his other companions came and dissipated his dream. Naoh himself had not continued the experiment of living with the mammoths. When he became chief of the

horde he forgot his journey with Nam and Gaw, and only thought of leading the Oulhamrs to lands favourable for them. The Horde was too numerous and too keen on the chase to give the animals confidence; they kept their distance and could only be approached by cunning or taken in ambushes.

Here Zouhr could have touched the lion's nose by merely reaching his outstretched arm down the fissure. Although he would perhaps have preferred a less formidable wild beast, his imagination was working slowly. Moreover the habit which links beings together was growing. Everything that repeats itself harmlessly ceases to seem terrible. That large chest, that head like a block of basalt, those fiery eyes, no longer made Zouhr tremble. His subtle, youthful senses became aware that he himself had grown familiar to the carnivore. He was no longer considered as possible prey; he would no doubt cease completely to be regarded as such when his smell became gradually more intermixed with the odours of the den.

Summer was approaching. Scorching heat had settled down upon the earth. It burnt up the waterless steppes, it intensified the terrible energy of vegetation in the forest, jungles and savannahs, and the monstrous green life that enveloped the banks of the river. The teeming animal life became intolerable. Worms, spiders, insects, crustaceans, swarmed on all the folds of the leaves, the stalks and the flowers; the viscous flesh of the worms, reptiles and molluscs, frogs and toads accumulated in the bays; herds of herb-cropping animals came up from the arid plains, and despite the presence of the great feline, the tiger and the lion hunted in proximity to the chain of rocks. Aoun and Zouhr only went out in the early morning, and never dallied till the evening twilight. They knew that a black lion with two lionesses occupied the northern jungle, and from the top of their post of observation they saw that a tiger and tigress had invaded the confluence of the great river and the stream. It would be necessary to walk the third part of a summer's day to reach their lair and rather less to arrive at the jungle. Sometimes, as night fell, the sound of the lion's roars came nearer, or the strident voice

of the tiger; the great feline of the cavern would then give vent to his thunderous voice.

At times Aoun and Zouhr thought of leaving their refuge. But when morning dawned they forgot that hungry clamour, prey became ever more and more abundant, rendering their hunting invariably successful; and the nocturnal carnivores slept before the dawn broke, drunk with meat and blood.

Zouhr said, "Further on there are more tigers, lions and other tawny beasts. Would Aoun and Zouhr find such a good cave elsewhere?"

The son of Urus did not reply. His soul was more nomadic than Zouhr's: he was curious about new countries. This desire was only occasionally a clearly conscious one, it appeared and disappeared like an appetite. Some mornings he would go alone to the confluence of the river, and observe the rocks where the lions slept. A sudden desire to fight would possess him, or a great longing would fill him to know what savannahs and hunting grounds and animals were hidden from his view in the distance. Sometimes he would follow the upward course of the river, putting two or three thousand ells between him and the lions. Again he would manage to cross the river, partly by swimming and partly by jumping from one erratic block to another. Then his chest would swell with the lust of travel, and he would gaze longingly at the blue depths of a forest barring the horizon. On his return a deep feeling of unrest would make his flesh creep.

During these absences, Zouhr would dry slices of meat in the sun, or else lay in a fresh store of roots. He was desirous to keep a good reserve of provisions, so that they might be masters of their movements and hours of repose. At intervals he would go down to the fissure, and if he found the feline awake, he accustomed it to the sound of the human voice.

One afternoon, when the shadows of the rocks had passed to the other bank of the river, he was surprised because Aoun did not return; and as he was tired of inaction, he climbed down with the help of leathern thongs, which enabled him to reach places otherwise inaccessible to all but birds and vampires.

First he went towards the confluence, but a long string of buffaloes barred his way. Zouhr knew that their tempers were uncertain, and that at the least alarm the males became dangerous. He made a great circuit towards the west, and was about to turn southwards when a rhinoceros appeared among the high grasses. The son of Earth tried to efface himself under the vaults of a banyan tree: the heavy beast followed him. Then he climbed up a hillock, turned along the edge of a pool, lost his way in the brushwood, and found himself once more in sight of the chain of rocks, but on the side which was inhabited by the giant feline.

The rhinoceros had disappeared. Zouhr studied this place, where neither of the companions had ever ventured before. The chain of rocks was more rugged and had deeper hollows than near the river. Two falcons rose in spirals, with hardly a stroke of their wings, towards a froth-like cloud. Despite the approach of sunset the light beat fiercely down upon the rocky desolation and the luxuriant verdure. Lying flat on his face in the shade, the Wah tried to discover the great beast's lair. He thought it must be down there among the great black hollows, where the shadows were indistinguishable from masses of rock. To the left, the pool was hidden behind a jungle of rushes; to the right there was a series of ravines, with archipelagoes of hillocks, and towards the chain of rocks there were lines of basalt, forming low ridges, ruinous walls and prisms. . . . Doubtless the brute was sleeping until the hour when carnivorous voices were wont to make themselves heard.

Suddenly Zouhr's hair stood on end. A thick-set lion had suddenly appeared on the top of one of the hillocks below him. It was not a yellow lion like those which had attacked the creeper hut, but it was a huge black lion of a kind that was unknown to him. The grass was short under the tree which gave Zouhr shade: the animal caught sight of the man. . . .

Zouhr remained lying on the ground paralyzed. He did not possess Aoun's strength or impetuosity. He could not drive his lance so deeply into a hard chest, and his club would not

break the animal's vertebrae or crush its limbs. He must take to flight; the tree was too low to give him safety. Below him he saw a crenellated wall which led by a sharp turn to the chain of rocks and was inaccessible to the carnivore.

He started off and bounded down the nearest passage, between the lines of basalt, while the lion descended the hillock with a roar. When Zouhr had reached the passage the brute could no longer see him. Without slackening his speed he took note of the crevices and fissures with great care. . . . He had gone more than a thousand ells before he turned round: his trail was deserted; the lion must have hesitated. Perhaps he was nonchalant like all of his kind and had given up the pursuit. Zouhr hoped he had done so, and went on towards the wall. A loud growl made him tremble all over, and with the corner of his eye he recognized the dark form of the brute. It came upon him with leaps and bounds, more fierce and determined than the tawny lions: Zouhr could hear its panting breath. . . . It was too late for him to reach the chain of rocks. A few more bounds and Zouhr would feel his bones being crushed. . . .

At this moment three projections attracted the fugitive's attention. They stood out like broken branches, and would allow him, with the aid of a fourth projection, to reach the top of the passage.

The ascent was only possible for an animal with hands or one of light weight. Zouhr jumped and reached the first projection, pulled himself up to the second and then to the third on his hands and feet, and hauling himself on to the last found himself on the crest of the ridge. The lion followed. . . . it made a tremendous leap, and fell back: the rock, which was almost vertical, offered no hold which could support its massive build. Three times it tried the escalade, then with a furious roar gave up the attempt. Its huge face was turned towards Zouhr, the yellow and the brown eyes stared fixedly at one another, full of fury and terror.

The son of Earth asked himself whether he should remain on the crest or descend the other side of the ridge.

There were two ways, one nearer the plain, the other

close to the rocky chain, by which the lion could reach the man. . . . So long as the lion remained motionless Zouhr hesitated. The moment he saw it begin to prowl, he decided upon flight, and descending the slope, he started in a northerly direction. He did not run at random, but examined the chain of rocks with the hope of discovering a refuge: his head was giddy and he seemed to see the cavern and the outline of the giant feline.

The lion had again disappeared; perhaps, with the patience of the carnivora, it was lying in wait; perhaps it did not notice the way in. . . . Zouhr scarcely asked himself the question, the urgent need for a shelter absorbed all his sensations; he unconsciously drew nearer to the rocks. . . .

He was fifty steps from his goal, when he realized that the pursuit had begun again. The black lion, retracing its steps, had caught sight of the man once more; its bounds made depressions in the long grasses; the rocks revealed no means of escape, and Zouhr now only followed the instinct of flight. . . . At last the basalt wall was close to him; again a panting sound arose among the rustling of the disturbed vegetable life. Zouhr stopped. His heart was bounding in his breast even as the lion bounded on the plain. The world was swimming before his dilated eyes. Life, which his young body loved, and which up to a moment ago seemed imperishable, was there; death was there also, made suddenly present by the approach of the wild beast. . . . The son of Earth felt as feeble as the ibis in the clutches of the eagle. . . . He no longer had any weapons even; he had only limbs without claws; the cruel fangs would dissect him like a fruit.

That one moment seemed as long as a whole twilight. Zouhr had his choice. On one side was the black lion and on the other the lair occupied by the giant feline. There was no longer time to hesitate. The devourer was six bounds distant from him. Then, in a second, with a giddy suddenness Zouhr resumed his flight; to die—but in the cavern—close to his refuge.

He was engulfed in the jaws of basalt rock, like a sparrow in the mouth of a cobra.

Two roars challenged each other. The massive black form of the lion stood out against the red light, and a creature of enormous stature stretched itself at the back of the lair. Then two bounds, the clashing of claws, the crashing of jaws and the giant feline had conquered. The black lion stumbled, rolled over, and conscious that it had met an unconquerable antagonist, grovelled and fled, its lifeblood flowing from a gaping wound.

The other stood motionless, with its rock-like head held high; it watched the invader's flight, and sent forth a thunderous roar towards the west.

Zouhr had hardly seen the battle. He only knew that the conqueror was the one in whose den he had taken refuge. Lying prone, with his hands on the ground, he waited silent and immovable. He had so completely abandoned the contest that even his fear was numbed; the giant feline destroyed both hope and despair; Zouhr resigned himself to what would follow, as he had resigned himself to pain when the sabre-tooth ripped his chest.

The colossus growled for another moment, then with heavy steps and licking a gash which had been made by the enemy's claws, it went back into its cave. It sniffed at the body of the man lying prostrate at its feet, and put a foot down on him, heavy as that of a gaur. It might tear that quivering flesh without the man making any movement. But the brute did not attempt to rend him, its breath came quite gently; Zouhr guessed that it recognized the smell which had penetrated each day through the fissure in the basalt. Then hope revived, a revolution took place in his young flesh which brought back the thought of life and never ceasing desires. . . . He looked up at the monstrous muzzle and remembering that the brute was accustomed to listening to the human voice, he murmured, "Zouhr is like an antelope under the paw of the lion of the rocks!"

The animal breathed harder, and gently removed its paw. The habit which had grown up between them when they were separated by the rock took on a new form. The Wah divined that every interval of peace increased his chances.

All that continues is continued by repetition. As the carnivore had not already devoured the man no doubt it would now never devour him. Zouhr would now never be its prey; there would be an alliance between him and the animal. . . .

Time passed. The crimson fire of the sun was about to disappear behind the hills. The giant feline had not struck. It listened intermittently to that changing voice which spoke to it. Crouched down before the son of Earth, it sometimes smelt him in order that it might know him better, sometimes it touched him with a velvet paw, as gently as it used to play with those who were born on the same day with it in the maternal lair. Fear coursed like lightning flashes through Zouhr's body, but each time with less violence. . . .

Darkness was slowly creeping over the eastern clouds, and the entrance to the cave was filled with a violet hue; two stars twinkled and the night breeze blew against the chain of rocks.

Then the giant feline rose up. The ardour of the chase flamed in its eyes, the night air with its smell of prey filled its nostrils. Zouhr knew that once more the moment of life or death was upon him. If the brute confused him with the trembling herb-croppers hidden in the jungle, the Son of Earth would never see Aoun again. Several times the great form came back towards the man. The fiery green eyes, that the darkness surrounded as with a halo, fixed themselves on the frail human being. . . . With a final snarl the carnivore left the cavern and gradually diminishing, disappeared into the night.

The warrior said to himself, "The lion of the rocks has made an alliance with Zouhr."

He went towards the fissure and shouted with a loud voice, "Aoun!"

A short time afterwards he heard the step of his companion: the light of a torch shone red about him, the son of Urus saw Zouhr at the entrance to the cave and gave a cry of terror, "The tiger of the Man-Devourers' country will tear Zouhr in pieces!"

"No," replied the Wah.

He told the tale of how the lion had pursued him and how he had come to the cave. Aoun listened with stupefaction to the story, first so wild, then so gentle, more wonderful than that of Naoh and the mammoths. The nomad soul, always ready for adventure and eager about unknown things, opened out.

He said with pride, "Aoun and Zouhr are now equal to the chief of the Oulhamrs!"

Then anxiety seized hold of him. He announced, "Zouhr cannot remain in the cavern any longer. I will go round and meet him."

The two men met again to the south of the chain of rocks; then, having lighted a fire on the ledge, they tasted the joy of a complete sense of security: while all around them in the brushwood and the jungle, ambushes were being laid from which the plaintive herb-croppers fled in the darkness, hiding themselves amongst the vegetation or dying under the claws of the carnivora.

THE TIGER AND THE FLAME

Aoun and Zouhr often went down to the fissure. When the giant feline was awake, they let it look at their faces and bodies, and spoke to it each in their turn. Aoun's presence at first aroused its impatience, a deeper breath would expand its heavy chest, sometimes a snarl would mark its distrust and anger. At last the brute got accustomed to mingling the two odours, and when it approached the fissure it did so from a certain confused sense of sympathy, because even wild creatures feel the dullness of solitude.

One evening Aoun said, "It is time to renew the alliance; Aoun and Zouhr will go into the cave on a day when the tiger of the Kzamms has had a successful hunt."

Zouhr did not refuse, although he was less prompt than his companion in risking his life. The alliance was his work; he often thought of it with satisfaction, and he told himself that there would no longer be any danger for them if they

were certain never to be menaced by the lion of the rocks. . . .

One morning they saw the body of a large antelope in the cave. One of its legs had been sufficient to appease the carnivore's hunger; it was sleeping heavily, tired with hunting and gorged with meat.

"We will go and see him when he wakes up," said Aoun, "he will not require any prey for two nights."

They thought of it as they wandered near the river, or rested in the shade of the rocks. The fierce sunlight burnt up the dry ground and gave endless life to the damp places. Hardly a sign of animal life was to be seen on the plain; eagles and falcons hid themselves, cranes and herons remained invisible; only from the distance came the snorting of a hippopotamus as it plunged back into the water, or the form of an alligator could be seen lying on the water in torpid repose.

Towards mid-day Aoun and Zouhr became drowsy. Then they fell into vague reveries, sitting on the ledge. The rock, which at first had been broiling, grew cool as the shadows lengthened, and a gentle breeze sprang up and played about the men's chests. They were conscious of many things within themselves which they were unable to express. It was the voluptuous feeling of youth and abundance, the sudden melancholy moods called forth by the thought of their far-away Horde, by the remembrance of hunting scenes, of the departure of the Oulhamrs towards the South-East, of mountains and the subterranean river, and the wonderful pictures which their imaginations drew of the unknown land.

When Aoun half shut his eyes, he could see again the dholes, hyenas and wolves before their fire screen, the sabre-tooth killing the rhinoceros, and himself killing the sabre-tooth. His heart began to beat again; victory flowed before his eyes like a river, and the desire to continue his conquests tightened all the Oulhamr's muscles. He thought of the lions as they prowled round the creeper hut, of the elephants stamping down the soil, the python devouring the antelope. Zouhr's imagination was haunted by similar pictures, but they took on other forms and details: he pre-

ferred to think of the giant feline. Aoun thought of it also and was impatient for the hour of dusk.

When the sun began to grow red, they went down to the depths of the cave. The beast no longer slept, it had caught hold of the antelope again and was gnawing its shoulder.

"Let us go towards it," said Aoun.

The son of Earth yielded to the desire of the Oulhamr. His courage was of slower growth, but when a project had once taken root in his mind he was as ready to risk his life as Aoun.

They re-ascended the ledge, then descended to the foot of the chain of rocks. The herds had drunk their fill and were looking for a place in which to spend the night; parakeets made the dusk hideous with their strident shrieks; a gibbon crouched on the ground, then bounded back among the palm trees. In the sunset light, Aoun and Zouhr walked round the rocks and came close to the cave.

Then Aoun said, "I will go first."

That was always his way; he went in front of Zouhr and exposed himself first to any danger. This time Zouhr resisted, saying, "The lion of the rocks knows me best. It is better that I should be between him and Aoun."

There was no pride between the two men. Each one valued the resources that lay within the other and reaped security from them. Aoun considered that Zouhr was right.

"Go," he said.

He held his club in his left hand and his strongest spear in his right. At that moment he had a better idea of the danger than the son of Earth. They looked at each other; an eagle gave its war-cry on a summit of basalt; six enormous gaurs fled in the glen. Zouhr walked quietly and his form stood out before the shadowy hole. He disappeared. Again he was face to face with the sovereign beast. It stopped tearing the antelope's flesh; the green fire of its eyes seemed to envelope the form of the Man-without-Shoulders. He said in a low voice, "The men have come to renew the alliance . . . The time of the rains is approaching, when prey will be hard to find and difficult to take. Then the lion of

the rocks will have the cunning of Aoun and Zouhr on his side!"

The giant feline half shut and reopened his eyes, then it rose in its nonchalant strength and came towards the man. Its head brushed against Zouhr's shoulder, and he passed his hand along the stiff mane. When they are touched, the most savage animals feel confidence. There was no longer any fear in the breast of the son of Earth. Several times he repeated the movement and even slowly rubbed the animal's spine. The wild beast remained motionless breathing quietly. . . .

Zouhr still hesitated to call his companion when a shadow appeared before the cave. Aoun was there, still holding his club and spear. The giant feline ceased to purr, its thick-set muzzle with its shining fangs opened. The skin on its head made great pleats, its muscles contracted and the green fire of its eyes shone phosphorescent.

"Aoun is also the ally of the lion of the rocks," murmured the Man-without-Shoulders. "Aoun and Zouhr live together in the cave above. . . ."

The monster gave a bound; the Oulhamr grasped his club; but Zouhr placed himself in front of his companion, and the immense chest ceased to heave; the alliance was complete.

They came back on the following days; the giant feline became accustomed to seeing them and desired their presence. The immense solitude of the world was distasteful to him; he was young, and from his birth until the previous autumn he had lived with others of his kind. Down the course of the stream he had had a den on the border of a lake, with his mate. His little ones had already begun to hunt. One night the lake rose tumultuously, the waters overflowed the brushwood, a cyclone carried away the palm trees, a torrent engulfed the mother with her young, and the male lion, carried down with the big trees, was washed up in the open country. . . .

The old den remained under water for a whole season. . . . The desolate male had sought for it at first with vehement and dogged anxiety; his roars had summoned his race in the

autumn rains; vivid memories had shot through his dull brain . . . Days went by; the giant feline discovered the chain of rocks and took refuge there from the cataracts of the clouds. An obscure sadness made his sides grow lean; when he woke in the morning he smelt all round the cavern, and when he brought back his prey, he looked all about him as if he expected to find those who used to share it with him. In the end these recollections became dim and finally disappeared. He grew accustomed to smelling no other creature at his side, but his body could not resign itself to the dullness of being alone. . . .

One evening Aoun and Zouhr accompanied him in the chase. They all three passed into the jungle, where the light of the half moon made patterns on the earth. Alarmed by the smell of the carnivore, the herb-cropping animals awoke in their lairs. They all retreated to the innermost recesses, or climbed into the branches of trees. Those of them who lived in herds warned each other mysteriously of the danger. In the midst of these innumerable lives, he remained as if in a desert. The power of immense bulk was always defeated by the keen senses, the ruses, the agility and the subtleness of the feeble ones. With one movement he could kill the wild ass, the antelope, the wild board or the nylghau; with one bound he could overthrow a horse or even a gaur; but they knew how to hide in impenetrable places, or to vanish into the distance. It was only their numbers that favoured the sovereign beast, for it caused them to swarm in every part of the plains, the woods and the jungle.

In spite of all his advantages, when day dawned it often found the great feline, tired with his efforts and out of patience, returning famished to the chain of rocks. On this particular night he was unable for a long time to capture an axis or an antelope. His strong pungent odour, to which was added the more delicate scent of the men, enlarged the limits of the area into which the fugitives took care not to intrude.

At last he lay in ambush on the confines of a jungle and a marsh. Strongly-scented flowers spread their smell around, the

earth was redolent of musk and rottenness. The men had separated themselves from him and had also hidden, one among the rushes and the other in a clump of bamboos. All the animals had fled. Enormous batrachians roared like gayals; in the distance there was the sound of a galloping herd; an owl flew by on downy wings; then a wild boar passed, tearing up the soil with its tusks. . . .

It was a heavily-built animal, with thick neck and shoulders and slender legs, and it came on in a surly manner puffing and grunting. It knew its own strength, and a slow heavy kind of courage animated its grey, bristle-covered body. It had put the leopards to flight, it disdained the hyenas, routed the dholes and the wolves; it would stand up to a lion if flight were impossible or a wound had infuriated it. The consciousness of having defeated all who had attacked it, made it less vigilant.

The wild boar reached the rushes where Zouhr was standing and, suddenly smelling his presence, stopped. The scent reminded it of the gibbon or the rhesus monkey, from whom it knew that it had nothing to fear. It merely grunted and passed on towards the bamboos. Then, in order to turn it towards the giant feline, Aoun shouted his war-cry, which was at once repeated by the son of Earth. The wild boar retreated, not because it was afraid, but from motives of prudence. A trap lurked always in the unknown! Neither the rhesus nor the gibbon had that singular voice. At the second cry it flung itself in the direction where the giant feline lay in ambush. A colossal form rose up; the wild boar thrust furiously with its tusks, but the beast which was upon it had almost the weight of a buffalo. It stumbled, its sides were torn open, and a pair of granite-like jaws were sunk in its throat. . . . The red flow of life gushed out, and the wild boar sank on the grass in the throes of death.

When the prey was safely in the cave, Aoun wished to test whether the alliance was complete. He took his axe and cut off a leg of the wild boar; the giant feline did not interfere.

The men knew then that their strength had become as great as that of a horde.

They hunted many times with the great feline. Often they went long distances from the den, or their prey kept ever further away from the domicile of the terrible inhabitant of the rocks. Aoun's heart beat high. He aspired to yet more distant expeditions; impatient curiosity urged him on. One morning he said to Zouhr, "It is good that we should know the hunting grounds. . . . Perhaps many beasts will go further off in the autumn. Will Zouhr accompany me beyond the haunts of the tigers?"

Zouhr had never refused to accompany his companion. Although his curiosity was less vagabond, it still was great, and intensified by youth.

"We will go and see the lands where the river goes," he said.

They sharpened their weapons, dried and smoked some meat, roasted some roots, and set off just as the sun, in all its grandeur, was rising above the further bank, deeper in colour than the reddest of minium. Zouhr did not leave the cave without some regrets. He had lived in security and abundance there, and he had concluded an alliance with the great feline. But the soul of Aoun urged on his steps towards unexplored regions.

They advanced without difficulty until the middle of the day, and even after the noon-day sleep, which the heat of the sun made obligatory. Aoun's sharp eyes and his dhole-like sense of smell discovered the reptiles on their path; the carnivores slept, and only insects troubled them. Red headed flies buzzed unbearably, and followed the odour of meat in myriads; stinging gnats flitted in the shade, and the wanderers had to guard against the great hornets, six or seven of which could kill a man. When they halted the neighbourhood of the white ants had to be avoided.

It was late when they reached the confluence. Aoun knew the river, having crossed it many times. He guided Zouhr over the line of erratic blocks, and brought him to the tigers' hunting grounds. Then everything became terrible. During

the day the lion is in his lair. Like man he prefers a fixed abode, to which he always returns. But the tiger prowls everywhere, and makes his resting place wherever the fortunes of the chase or the chance of his wanderings may lead him; he is content with places which would repel other wild animals . . . Therefore man cannot foresee his movements and cannot tell which way to take to avoid him . . .

The Oulhamr and the son of Earth walked at a little distance from each other, so as to increase the area of their observation. At first the presence of the herb-cropping animals assisted them: antelopes, saigas, gaurs and panolia deer would not have had their feeding grounds in the neighbourhood of the tigers. When the land became empty round them, the nomads suffered tortures of anxiety. The country was varied: in some parts the jungle opened out into clear spaces, savannahs and marshes, in others the bamboos and palmtrees grew close together. Aoun thought it better to return towards the river, because the many islands in it promised safety. The solitude of the land became ever more profound, while the water was teeming with life. The wake of long alligators could be seen among the islands; hordes of webfooted creatures and waders dabbled in the coves, and sleeping pythons displayed their clammy coils.

"We have come near to the tigers," said Zouhr in a low voice.

Aoun, listening intently, advanced at a slow pace. The jungle, which at first had lain far from the bank, was now close to it, a tangled mass of prickly growth covered with creepers.

The son of Earth stopped and said, "It is here that the tigers come down to the river to drink."

He pointed out an opening in the brushwood. Other signs revealed themselves and Zouhr bent down to examine them more closely. They still exhaled an acrid odour.

He whispered, "They have passed this way."

Zouhr was trembling with excitement. Aoun anxiously made ready his spear. It seemed as if something of the wild beasts themselves had remained there with their emana-

tions. . . . A crackling sound was heard in the thicket. The two men became as motionless as trees. Flight was useless. If the wild beasts were near, there was nothing left but to fight . . . But nothing appeared. Aoun sniffed the gentle breeze wafted from the jungle and said, "The tigers are still far away."

They resumed their journey, making haste to pass the danger zone. Soon the jungle joined the actual river bank and as it became still more impenetrable at the edge, the men were obliged to change their direction and plunge inland among the bamboos.

Finally they reached a place where some herbivores were feeding. As twilight was coming on they tried to find a suitable place for a camp. There was no sign of a rock as far as the eye could reach, and it was no longer possible to reach an island: The country was enveloped in jungle; evening would be upon them before they could reach the water.

Zouhr discovered a group of seven bamboos, which, as they grew close together, formed a kind of enclosure. Three of the interstices were so narrow that a man could not pass between them; Aoun and Zouhr could just squeeze in sideways through two of the others, but it would be impossible for a lion or a tiger to make its way through them. The two last were more than an ell wide at the base, but grew narrower towards the top, so that it would be necessary to close them with branches or creepers up to twice Aoun's height from the ground.

They quickly tore up some creepers and young bamboos which would make a solid barrier. The son of Urus prepared them, while Zouhr, who was more clever at constructing things, tied and interlaced them according to the custom of his ancestors.

Twilight had come when their work was finished, and no suspicious form had appeared about them. They then made a fire and roasted dried meat and roots. It was a pleasant repast, for effort had augmented their hunger, and they tasted the joy and pride of their manhood. No animal, not even among those that knew most about construction, would

have been able to protect itself from the carnivores so quickly and so securely. When they had eaten, they remained for some time at the entrance of their refuge.

The moon, which had completed nearly half its course, was moving westward. A few stars shone in the sky, and Zouhr asked himself what sort of men lit them every evening. Their minuteness was surprising. They seemed like the points of feeble torches, while the sun and moon resembled fires lit with branches. But as they burnt for so long, it must be that their flames were continually fed: Zouhr tried to make out the forms of those who piled wood on them, and could not understand why they remained invisible . . . Sometimes he wondered about the immense heat of the sun, which was stronger when it shone high in the sky than when towards evening it grew much larger. These dreams soon mystified and wearied Zouhr. He abandoned them, and even completely forgot them. This evening he remembered the clouds which had become filled with flames after the sun's departure. There were more fires in the west than if all the fires lighted by the Oulhamrs during a whole winter had been united in one evening . . . And all those fires produced less light and heat than the sun. Zouhr thought about it for a moment, then his reflections almost frightened him. None of the Men-without-Shoulders or the Oulhamrs had ever seemed to be moved by this thought.

He said mechanically, "What men light the sky when the sun is gone?"

Aoun, after dreaming of tigers, had fallen into that sort of torpor which did not prevent his senses taking note of all the perils of the night. Zouhr's question awoke him.

He did not quite understand it at first, and he was not surprised, for Zouhr had ideas which were strange to other men.

Lifting his head towards the zenith, he considered the stars.

"Is Zouhr speaking of the little fires in the sky?"

"No, Zouhr is speaking of the big red and yellow fires which have just gone out. Are they lit by hordes? . . . If so

they must be more numerous than the Oulhamrs, the Kzamms and the Red Dwarfs."

Aoun's brow contracted. He vaguely imagined beings hidden above him, and the idea was a disagreeable one.

"Night puts out the fires," he replied with hesitation . . . "Night makes our fire shine more brightly!"

This reply disconcerted the son of Earth, and he continued to think of it long after Aoun had forgotten the question, which did not interest him.

Meanwhile the breeze freshened and brought sounds from far off. Furtive animals moved over the moor and disappeared. Some of them stopped to look at the fire, the light of which shone ever more brightly. Five or six dholes prowled round stealthily, smelling the odour of roast meat, but they soon disappeared. Suddenly some panolia deer came out of the jungle and ran wildly away.

Aoun sat up. He sniffed, listened and whispered, "It is time to go into the refuge."

Then he added, "The tiger is near!"

They slipped between the interstices of the bamboos.

The brushwood had been pushed aside at a little distance from them. A striped animal appeared in the silver and ash-grey coloured light. It was as large as a lion in bulk, but it was not so high, and its body was longer and more supple. The Oulhamrs and the Men-without-Shoulders dreaded it more than any other living creature, for the lion had less cunning, fury and swiftness, the sabre-tooth was unknown on the other side of the mountains, and among the Oulhamrs two old warriors, Naoh and Goun of the Dry Bones, were the only men who had met the giant feline.

The tiger moved without haste, with sinuous undulations that had a terrifying effect. It halted at sight of the flames, lifting its thick-set head and displaying a pale chest, while its eyes shone like glow-worms. It was the largest tiger that Aoun and Zouhr had ever seen. Despite the anxiety which made the blood course faster through his veins, the son of Urus admired it, for he had a predilection for powerful animals, even when they were his enemies.

He said however, "The tiger of the Men-Devourers is stronger than this one."

Zouhr added, "He is as a leopard in comparison with the lion of the rocks."

Notwithstanding this they felt that, for a man, the tiger was as much to be feared as their brute companion of the cave.

The tiger halted a moment and then approached obliquely in a diffident manner. It feared the fire; it had fled before it when the prairie was struck by lightning, but this glow more resembled the light which appears at the end of night. It came so close that it began to feel the heat, and at the same time it saw the dancing flames and heard their roaring and crackling. Its mistrust grew; it walked round the fire at a safe distance and this movement brought it near the bamboos. It caught sight of the men at the same moment that their smell made it aware of their presence.

It snarled, and gave two hunting cries like those of the dholes.

Without thinking, Aoun replied by shouting his war-cry. The tiger gave a start of surprise and looked sharply at its adversaries. Their odour resembled that of its most timid victims, their size seemed hardly greater than that of wolves.

Now all those that could stand against it were of immense stature. These, however, were unknown to the tiger, and age having endowed it with experience of surprises, it practised prudence. The proximity of the fire added mystery to the strangeness of the men. The tiger approached the bamboos slowly, then it walked round them. Its long life in the jungle had perfected its instinct for judging distances, that instinct which invariably enabled it to make sure of its prey when it could be attained at one bound. It knew also the strength of the bamboos. It did not attempt to force the narrow interstices; it stopped in front of the interlaced branches and creepers. It tried them with its claws and attempted to tear out the thinnest ones, when Aoun's spear all but came in contact with its nostrils.

It drew back growling and stood undecided. This attack

made the unknown creature more strange to it. Its anger rose, a furious growl rattled in its throat, and gathering itself up for a spring, it attempted an overwhelming attack. This time the spear caught an angle of its jaw, for the oscillation of the branches and the carnivore's movement had not permitted Aoun to take good aim. The assailant realized the resistance offered by the obstacle and the man's courage; it drew back again, crouched on the ground and waited.

It was not the hour for hunting. The tiger was thirsty. Had it not seen the fire it would have gone first to the river. After a time its anger cooled; it felt again that dryness of the glands which only fresh water could appease . . .

Then with a long snarl, it got up, walked twice round the refuge and went away. There was a gap in the jungle which led to the river bank. Aoun and Zouhr saw it disappear.

"It will come back," said Zouhr, "perhaps with its mate."

"Not a single creeper has been torn away," replied the son of Urus.

They thought of their late peril for some time, but they felt no anxiety about the future. The refuge had protected them and would protect them again. It was unnecessary even to watch, and as soon as they lay down they were lost in slumber.

PART III

THE ATTACK OF THE TIGER

Aoun woke when a third of the night had passed. The moon had gone down behind the western jungle, and its light reddened the vapours which were condensing on the branches. The moor was covered with pale grey shadows; the fire shed only a faint light near the seven bamboos.

At first the warrior only saw the motionless vegetation, but his sense of smell warned him of a living presence. Then a shadow emerged, became detached from a clump of palm trees and approached cautiously towards him. Aoun knew it was the tiger from the moment he opened his eyes, and he watched it come with anxiety and anger. The daring spirit which worked in him like a storm on the waters dilated his chest. Although he knew the tiger's superiority over man, and despite the secret horror which possessed him, he desired to fight. Had not Naoh conquered the grey wolf and the tigress, had he not himself overcome the sabre-tooth, the victor of the rhinoceros? For a moment he felt giddy, but this soon passed, the prudence of his ancestors calmed his blood; he knew that neither Naoh nor Faouhm nor the Hairy Men would have attacked the tiger unless their own lives had been in danger . . .

Besides, one had awoken who would restrain him. The son of Earth became aware in his turn of the terrible presence. He looked at his companion, who had raised his club, and said, "The tiger has not found any prey."

"If he comes near us," said the other in a quivering voice, "Aoun will fling his spear and harpoon."

"It is dangerous to wound the tiger. Its fury is greater than that of the lion," was the reply.

"And if it will not go away from our refuge?"

"Aoun and Zouhr have provisions for two days."

"We have no water and the tigress may join him."

Zouhr did not reply. He had already thought of that. He knew that the wild beasts would sometimes take turns in watching a difficult prey. After hesitating a moment he replied, "The tiger has been alone since last night. Perhaps the tigress is far from here."

Aoun could not see sufficiently clearly into the future to insist; his attention was concentrated on the tiger, which had come within five ells of the bamboos.

They could distinctly see the thick-set muzzle, fringed at the back with stiff hairs, the eyes shining more brightly than before. Aoun had a strange horror of their green light, and they made Zouhr tremble. At intervals growls could be heard on the moor. The tiger came closer; then it began to prowl up and down and round the shelter, with an awful and exasperating patience. It seemed as if it expected that the interstices would grow bigger or the interlaced creepers and bamboos become relaxed. Each time it came close to them the two men trembled as if the wild beast's hope was about to be realized.

Finally it crouched in the dry grass. From there it observed them patiently, and from time to time opened its great jaws, so that the dying light of the fire shone upon its fangs.

"It will still be there in the morning," said Aoun.

Zouhr did not reply. He was looking at two little branches of the turpentine tree which he had exposed to the fire, for he always liked to have some dry wood ready. He split the thinnest one down its whole length and gathered together some twigs.

"Zouhr is not going to make a fire!" exclaimed the son of Urus reprovingly.

"There is no wind; the ground of our refue is bare; the

bamboos are young," said Zouhr striking the stone flint against the marcasite . . . "Zouhr has only need of a little fire!"

Aoun did not insist. He watched the sparks rise from the twigs, while his companion lighted the end of a turpentine stick. It soon threw out a bright light. Then, leaning towards one of the openings, the son of Earth flung the burning brand towards the tiger . . .

The flame described a parabola and fell among the dry grass. It was the most arid part of the moor, where the nocturnal vapours had not yet formed . . .

The tiger started up at sight of the glittering projectile, which disappeared among the tall grass stalks. Aoun laughed silently. Zouhr was carefully considering whether he should light another torch.

Only a twinkling red glow remained among the vegetation. The tiger lay down again.

After a moment's hesitation Zouhr lit the second turpentine stick. The fire had just caught the point of it, when a livid jet appeared where the first had fallen, ran up the grass stalks, and made a line of light. The wild beast rose up with a roar, and was about to spring when Zouhr flung the second burning brand.

It struck the brute on the chest. Maddened, it turned round and round and bounded from side to side in zig-zags. The fire, with a dry crackling sound, seemed to gallop its way through the tall grass; then it disseminated itself in sheafs and enveloped the wild beast . . . The carnivore gave a cry of fury, plunged through the flames and fled.

"It will not come back," Zouhr asserted. "No beast returns to the place where it has been burnt."

His companion's cunning delighted Aoun. His laugh was no longer silent but rang out over the moor, like a joyous war-cry.

"Zouhr is more cunning than Goun of the Dry Bones," he said enthusiastically.

He laid his muscular hand on the shoulder of the son of Earth.

The tiger did not return. Aoun and Zouhr slept till daybreak. A mist covered the moor and the jungle; silence and stillness lasted till the full dawn. Then the day animals began to stir. A loud clamour rose from the river and the trees of the forest. The son of Urus came out of the refuge and studied the landscape. No suspicious odour alarmed his nostrils and some axis passed by, which reassured him still more.

He went back to Zouhr and said, "We will continue our journey; but we will first go in a westerly direction so as not to meet the tiger."

They started before day had fully dawned. The mist slowly rolled away and was lost in the pale sky, which rapidly turned blue. At first there were few animals to be seen; then their numbers increased and the warriors conjectured that they had left the domain of the tiger behind them. Aoun however sniffed the air anxiously. Feverish heat hung over the foliage; red-headed flies tormented the two men; the sun's rays shot through the branches and seemed to bite into their flesh like white ants; monkeys made faces at them, and parrots shrieked in strident and furious tones.

"There will be thunder in the forest!" said the son of Earth.

Aoun stopped to consider the western sky. They were at the entrance of a clearing and could see a long stretch of firmament, of the colour of lapis lazuli, without a single cloud. Notwithstanding this the two men felt a vague uneasiness, which seemed to pervade the air like an unseen terror.

It lasted for a long time. Aoun and Zouhr turned aside towards the river, following the lines indicated by the various kinds of undergrowth. At mid-day the storm was still far off. They made no fire, but ate, without enjoyment, a slice of meat they had cooked on the previous day. Their rest was disturbed by the attacks of insects.

When they resumed their journey, the first mists were appearing in the west. A milky colour spread itself among the blue; the uneasy belling of the swamp deer was heard, and the lowing of buffaloes; cobras slipped by among the

grasses. For a moment the warriors hesitated to start, but their halting-place was not a favourable one: immense old trees lifted crests that were dangerously high; the ground was spongy at their feet; they could see no shelter against the thunder-bolts that would ravage the forest. At intervals gusts of air passed over the crests of the trees with a sound like that of a river, or rose up in spirals, brushing aside the foliage. This was followed by deep, heavy silence. A wall of vapour rose towards the zenith, black smoke that became phosphorescent towards the edge. Then furious livid gleams of light shot through the world of trees. They had their origin very far from where Zouhr and Aoun stood, so they did not add their clamour to the tumult of the storm. When the wall shrouded the middle of the firmament and began to descend towards the east, a growing terror took possession of all living things; here and there only a fugitive animal could be seen seeking its lair, or a frightened insect trying to reach some crack in the bark of a tree. The life of the creatures was enveloped by another life, that life which, subtly diffused, creates and nourishes the forest life, but which if it is unchained destroys alike trees, grass and animals.

The wanderers had experienced these convulsions of nature. Aoun only thought of a refuge; Zouhr lifted his head from time to time possessed by the idea that monstrous wild beasts were raging in the clouds. Already their roars could be heard. Distance made them solemn, like the sound of lions' voices lost among the hills. Then the thunder broke and the glare of the lightning became intolerable. A sound of running water was heard, which soon grew to the roar of rapids and of torrents. The jungle opened upon a lake which was preceded by marshes; no shelter was visible in the reeking ground; and the thunder rolled on at intervals. Under the arcades of a banyan tree where the two men stopped, a leopard crouched; sharp cries were heard from the monkeys in the branches above. Water flowed as if an ocean had broken through dykes in the sky; the smell of thunder and the scent of plants was borne on the squalls of wind . . . In

an hour the lake had risen; the marshy pools were full; one of them overflowed and began to invade the forest.

The wanderers were forced to retreat; but other waters came on with a roar which added to the noise of the storm. They were forced to flee as best they could towards the East. The raging waters harassed them. They had barely escaped from the floor on one side when it appeared unexpectedly on the other. Aoun galloped like a stallion, and Zouhr followed him, bent down and hardly lifting his feet, as was the custom of the Men-without-Shoulders. When they had put a space between themselves and the inundation they continued their way towards the east, in the hope of reaching the river.

They traversed moors, and threaded their way through bamboos, palms and creepers. A marsh which had overflowed obliged them to turn towards the North. The storm was abating, the gusts of wind howled less loudly, and they finally reached a clearing where a torrent formed by the rain was racing along . . .

There they stopped, trying to estimate the depth of the water.

The lightning struck a group of ebony trees; on the other bank the long body of a terrified animal rose in great bounds; Aoun and Zouhr recognized the tiger. It turned round and round for a time in terror, then it stopped and perceived the human beings . . .

Aoun's instinct told him that it was the one which had prowled round the refuge. Zouhr was certain of it when he saw that its chest was singed, and knew it must have been done by the burning grass . . . More vaguely the tiger recognized the prey that had escaped him, made memorable by the fire, the barricade of creepers and the burning grass. He found them again at the moment when another fire struck the ebony trees. Their forms thus associated in its mind with terrible things, made the wild beast hesitate.

All three remained immovable for a time. There was too small a space between the men and the beast to make flight possible.

Aoun had already got ready his spear, and Zouhr, fearing that flight might be followed by pursuit, also prepared himself to fight.

It was he who first hurled his weapon. It whistled above the waters and hit the brute close to its right eye. With a terrible roar it made its spring, but blood impeded its sight: its bound had not that awful precision which condemned to death all within its reach. The long body fell into the torrent, turned round and round, and clung to the bank by its front paws. Aoun threw himself upon it, his spear struck its breast, missing the shoulder . . . Maddened with rage the brute hoisted itself on to the bank and charged the men. It was lame, and it moved slowly; Zouhr pierced its side with a second spear, while the son of Urus wounded it on the neck . . .

Then, holding their clubs in readiness, they waited. Aoun faced the attack and brought down his weapon on the tiger's head, while the Wah attacked it from behind and aimed at the vertebrae . . . One of its claws tore the Oulhamr's body, but by stepping aside he made it slip, and the club, crashing down on the tiger's nostrils momentarily arrested its course . . . Before it could spring again, Aoun's club came down for the third time with such force that the tiger remained motionless, as if it slept. Then, without pausing for a moment, the two companions belaboured its vertebrae and legs with blows. The enormous body sank down, with terrible convulsions, and the son of Urus having put out its left eye, the wild beast was at the men's mercy.

A spear thrust let out its heart's blood.

THE FOREST OF THE LEMURIAN MEN

The weather was mild on the following days. The warriors advanced confidently through lands where the river was as broad as a lake. The joy of the conqueror was upon them, which made the recollection of past perils almost agreeable to them, without diminishing their prudence. They found

temporary homes in the jungle, on the river bank, among the rocks, in the hollows of trees thousands of years old, in thickets where the thorns were so strong that after having cut a passage for themselves with their axes, and stopped up the entrance, they could defy the carnivores.

Their way was barred by a lake, which made them turn aside from the river, and they found themselves at the foot of a mountain. It was not a high one. After walking for a quarter of a day, they reached a plateau, which began with a savannah, and became a forest; it stretched from North-east to South-west, and was dominated on the North-east by another chain of mountains where two rivers, which fed another lake, took their rise.

Aoun and Zouhr did not get close to the forest till near sunset. A crevice in a porphyry rock gave them shelter and they barricaded the opening with branches. Then they lit a great fire on the savannah and roasted an iguanoid. The heat was not so great as on the plains, and a breeze which blew from the neighbouring mountains refreshed the air of the plateau. The two men enjoyed the coolness after so many torrid nights; it reminded them of the watches of the Oulhamrs. They took almost as much pleasure in breathing it in as they did in eating. The rustling of the forest was like the sound of running water in the distance. At times they heard the roar of a wild best, the hyenas' sinister laugh, or the howling of a pack of dholes.

A sudden clamour arose, then strange forms appeared in the trees. They resembled dogs and at the same time Red Dwarfs. Their over-mobile faces were lit up by round eyes placed too close together. Their four legs ended in hands.

Aoun and Zouhr recognized them. They were the rhesus monkeys, who have green hair on their backs, and yellow on their chests, and whose faces are as red as the setting sun. They looked at the fire. The son of Earth did not dislike them. In one sense he considered them like himself, as he did the Men-Devourers. Aoun shared this belief. Since their arrival in this new country, the wanderers had met them almost every day, and knew that they were inoffensive. But on ac-

count of their resemblance to the Red Dwarfs, the rhesus inspired them with a vague uneasiness.

About a dozen of them could be seen in the last rays of daylight. Having watched the flames for a moment, they bounded from branch to branch, and from tree to tree, with giddy rapidity; then they stopped and again began to take note of the unusual spectacle. At last a big male—he was like a wolf in build—slowly descended to the ground and advanced towards the fire. When he had covered a distance of about ten ells, he stopped and gave a sort of gentle whimper, which was at the same time an appeal.

Aoun had lifted his spear, remembering the treachery of the Red Dwarfs, who were hardly larger than the rhesus. He let it fall again when he heard the cry. After waiting a moment the monkey advanced another few ells. Then he seemed to have stopped for good, rendered motionless by a combination of fear and curiosity.

Loud howls resounded; three wolves appeared on the summit of a mound. As the wind blew away from them neither the men nor the rhesus had noticed their approach.

The rhesus tried to reach the trees. The most active of the wolves got ahead of him, the two others barred his retreat. Only the way to the fire remained free. The great monkey stood for a moment distracted, while his companions in the trees chattered despairingly. He turned his anxious face towards the men, saw that the wolves were drawing nearer, and mad with terror, dashed forward.

At the moment when he got near the fire, the three pursuers were converging upon him; the most active of them was only ten ells distant. The rhesus gave a mournful cry. There was no space left between the flesh-eaters and the fierce flames. Death was before him and the simian felt its cold horror. He turned first towards the forest, towards that ocean of leaves where he could so easily have escaped from the teeth of his enemies . . . then a second time his distressed face was turned imploringly towards the men.

Zouhr rose, his spear held high in his hand. A race instinct boiled within him; he bounded towards the monkey. The

wolf recoiled before the man's form, and Aoun in his turn sprang to his feet. The wolves howled; though they still kept their distance, they feigned attack, with lips turned up menacingly.

Aoun disdainfully threw a stone. Struck in the shoulder the nearest wolf fell back towards the others.

"Wolves are not worthy of spears or javelins," mocked the son of Urus.

Among the trees one could see the other monkeys bounding from branch to branch, while the motionless fugitive looked anxiously at the men who had just saved his life. His long arms trembled. Fear had taken possession of him; he was afraid of the unknown fire, afraid of the wolves, afraid also of those forms which stood up so straight, and of that strange voice which differed from any of the voices of the forest or the steppes. By degrees his heart beat less quickly, and his round eyes sought those of the men. He began to feel reassured; when the stronger one does not strike first, after a little while the feebler one thinks that he will not strike at all. The rhesus was now afraid only of the fire and the wolves. Then the fire ceased to alarm him, as it remained within the pile of heaped-up branches.

Aoun and Zouhr, having chased away the wild beasts, took stock of their guest. He was sitting down like a child, and his little hands completed the resemblance; also his chest, which was nearly flat.

"The wolves shall not eat the little green dwarf," said Aoun with a laugh which made the monkey start.

"Aoun and Zouhr will take him back to the trees!" added the Wah. He began to tremble again as they approached him. Their slow movements, the tones of their voices, no longer loud as when they were threatening the wolves, calmed the rhesus, and there was a feeling of gentleness between them. For Aoun and Zouhr there was pleasure in the thought of having a new companion, who excited their curiosity and made life less bleak.

Time passed. The wolves still watched; they howled at intervals; they were furious with the fire, the men, and the

prey that had escaped them, not by cunning or swiftness, but through an incomprehensible intervention. At last they disappeared. They faded into the night and, as they were no longer down wind, it was impossible for their approach to be unobserved should they return.

The rhesus did not go away at once. He began to grow accustomed to the fire: the breeze blew more chill from the mountains; the sky was too clear, it absorbed the heat; the beast imitated man and took pleasure in the hot breath which came from the flames.

Then the rhesus gave a little cry, looked fixedly at his hosts and bounded towards the trees.

Aoun and Zouhr regretted his departure.

The next day the two men returned to the forest. It astonished them by the enormous size of its trees and undergrowth. There were fewer serpents than on the plains; the tribe of white-headed crows croaked in the tops of the trees; gaurs passed across the clearing, while black bears shewed themselves on the forks of the big branches. Sometimes a leopard would come forth towards the close of day, without daring to attack the men. Then a horde of long-tailed entellus monkeys, with bearded faces, would appear. They assembled in clusters in the branches, with weird cries, enjoying the feeling of companionship and the sense of security which they derived from uniting to defend themselves and their territory.

On the fourth night, Aoun became aware of a peculiar smell. No other odour which he had smelt since his arrival in this new land so much resembled the human effluvia. He shuddered; fear made his hair stand on end. Neither the odour of the tiger, the lion, the sabre-tooth, nor that of the giant feline would have seemed so alarming to him.

He wakened Zouhr so that they might be ready to fight, and both of them kept all their senses on the alert. The Wah's power of smell was not so strongly developed as that of the Oulhamr, he only noticed a faint odour, but Aoun affirmed with dilated nostrils, "The smell is that of the Kzamms."

The Kzamms were the most ferocious of men. Tufts of fur,

in colour like that of the fox, covered their faces and bodies; their arms were as long as those of the Tree Men, their legs were short and bowed, their thighs hung in three fleshy folds and their toes were enormous. They ate the vanquished Oulhamrs, and had devoured the few Men-without-Shoulders who had escaped extermination.

For a little while the smell seemed to grow weaker, the mysterious being appeared to be going farther away. Then it became stronger again and finally Zouhr whispered, "The son of Urus speaks truly; it is like the smell of the Kzamms."

An agony of impatience made Aoun breathe quickly. His club was at his feet; he made ready his bow, in order to shoot to a great distance. . . .

It now became certain that more than one of the mysterious creatures was near; the smell came from two directions.

He said, "They see us and we do not see them. . . . We *must* see them ourselves!"

Zouhr, always more in favour of temporizing than the Oulhamr, hesitated.

"The light of the fire shows us up," continued Aoun.

He had picked up his club. The Wah once more tried to pierce the darkness; he could discern nothing, and thinking that the unknown enemies might attack them unexpectedly, he approved the action.

The son of Urus went forward, and Zouhr followed him in silence. They bent down and carefully examined every detail of the ground as they passed, stopping at intervals. Aoun swept their surroundings minutely with his eyes, his ears, and above all with his delicate sense of smell. He held his club in one hand, and his bow with the arrow ready strung in the other. He advanced, observing the odours all the time, and was gradually convinced that there were only two beings. . . .

There was a rustling sound. A bush moved, then a light step was heard upon the mould. Aoun and Zouhr could could discern an indistinct shape in the low underwood, but it was so dim that they could not tell whether it was standing upright or on all fours. The sound of footsteps, however, was that of only two paws; neither the rhesus, the long-

tailed monkeys nor even the gibbons would have fled in this manner.

Aoun said in a low voice, "They are men."

They stopped as if transfixed. The shadowy form took on a terrible significance. In face of this new peril Aoun suddenly and almost involuntarily shouted his war cry. Then a second set of footsteps was heard parallel to the first; after that the sound and the smell diminished. The Oulhamr started in pursuit. He was stopped first by some creepers, then by a marsh; Zouhr asked, "Why did Aoun shout his war-cry? Perhaps those men do not wish to fight us."

"They smelt like the Kzamms!"

"The smell of the Blue-Haired Men is also like that of the Kzamms."

The Oulhamr was struck by this reflection. An instinct of prudence kept him motionless for a moment; he sniffed for a long time in the half darkness and said, "They are gone!"

"They know the forest and we do not!" said Zouhr. "We shall not see them tonight. We must wait for morning."

Aoun did not reply. He made a few steps to the left and lay down with his ear to the ground. He became aware of all sorts of faint noises, and among them the son of Urus could only just distinguish the footsteps of the unknown beings. They grew fainter and became indistinguishable, while the sound of a small pack of prowling dholes came nearer.

"The Men-of-the-Forest did not dare fight!" he said rising to his feet, "or else they have gone to warn their brothers."

They came back to the fire and threw on more branches: their hearts were ill at ease. Then silence settled down on the world of trees; the danger seemed very far away; the Oulhamr slept, while Zouhr watched by the crimson flames.

Morning found them irresolute. Should they continue their journey or turn back? Zouhr, always less ready for adventure, wished to return once more to the bank of the river, by the chain of rocks, where the alliance with the great feline rendered them invincible. Aoun however, elated by what he had already accomplished, was averse to retreat.

He said, "Will not the Men of the Forest know how to

follow us if we go back? Why should there not be others in the country through which we have passed?"

Zouhr was all the more ready to agree to these ideas because they had occurred to him before Aoun had given expression to them. He knew well that men wandered further than jackals, wolves, or dholes. Only birds roamed over greater distances. That they had met no hordes on their way, did not prove that there had been none on their right hand or their left, and that they would not find them in the path of their return.

Zouhr agreed to take the risk. He was more foreseeing than Aoun, less ready to fight; his courage was equal to that of his companion, but he was more willing to accept the inevitable. The fatality of his race lived in him; all his own people having perished, he sometimes wondered at finding himself still alive. He would have been quite alone without Aoun; all his happiness was bound up in his alliance with the young Oulhamr, and there was no danger he might encounter which could compare with the loneliness of living without his companion.

The day passed without any alarms: when they had chosen their resting place no peculiar presence was revealed.

It was in the depths of the forest, but the lightning had set many of the trees on fire and burnt up the grass. Three blocks of schist supplied a refuge which could be sufficiently strengthened with thorns. Aoun and Zouhr roasted a leg of antelope, the flavour of which was pleasant to them; then they laid themselves down beneath the stars. Dawn was near when Aoun awoke. He saw that the Wah was standing up, listening intently, his head inclined towards the south.

"Has Zouhr heard the lion or the tiger pass?" he asked.

Zouhr did not know; he thought he had smelt a suspicious odour. . . . Aoun sniffed the air and affirmed, "The Men of the Forest have returned."

He pushed aside the thorn barricade, and went slowly towards the south. The smell had vanished; it was only the trail left by the mysterious beings. It was impossible to pursue them in the dusk. The two men went back into the refuge

and waited for daylight. A grey light began to spread among the clouds in the east. A bird filled its little chest and twittered. Shifting lights appeared among the clouds. Then day dawned. Amber-coloured lakes, emerald rivers, and purple mountains were born and died in the land of trees. Then a scarlet shape appeared, glinting through the forest groves. . . .

The Wah and the Oulhamr had already started. They were going towards the South, attracted by the unknown. The danger of being taken by surprise appeared to them greater than that of going in pursuit of those who were spying upon them. Their instinct told them that they must know the nature and strength of those beings, so that they might organize their defense, and Zouhr's prudence agreed with Aoun's ardour.

They walked quickly. There was little to impede their progress. It seemed as if paths had been made by the frequent passage of individuals or hordes. Aoun continued to wind the trail. For a long time the scent remained weak, then in the middle of the day, it strengthened. Aoun pursued his course impatiently. The forest began to grow lighter. A moor appeared, studded with trees, bushes and ferns at rare intervals, and with a few stagnant pools. . . .

Aoun hesitated for one moment, then suddenly he gave a cry: he had discovered quite fresh foot prints in the soft earth. Traces of broad feet with five toes were there, which more resembled men's feet than the feet of the dryopithecus.

The son of Urus stooped down and examined these footprints for a long time: then he announced, "The Men of the Forest are near, they have not yet regained their covert."

The companions started once more Their hearts beat fast, they did not go near any bush without having first made the circuit of it. When they had gone three or four thousand ells, Aoun pointed out a thicket of mastic trees, and said in a low voice, "They are there!"

A shudder ran through them; the sympathy which united them after so many days spent together was now blended with profound anxiety. They had no means of gauging the en-

emy's strength. All that Aoun knew was that there were only two of them. He considered himself as strong as Naoh, the strongest of all the Oulhamrs, but Zouhr was feeble; nearly all the warriors of the tribe could wield heavier clubs, and move more rapidly. They must try to carry on the fight from a distance; and if the others had no bows, the advantage would be on the side of the Oulhamr and the Wah.

"Is Zouhr ready to fight?" asked Aoun with gentle anxiety.

"Zouhr is ready. . . . but we must try first to make an alliance with the Men-of-the-Forest, like the Wahs did in old days with the Oulhamrs."

"Both hordes were enemies of the Red Dwarfs."

Aoun advanced first, as he had the keenest sense of smell and he wanted to stand the first shock. His fighting instinct, and the wish to preserve his companion's life, made him desire this.

When they were about a hundred ells distant, they began to make a circuit round the mastic trees, stopping from time to time so as to get a good view of the clear spaces in the thicket. No animal form became visible among the trunks or branches.

At last the Oulhamr lifted up his loud voice, "The Men-of-the-Forest think they are hidden from us, but we know their retreat. Aoun and Zouhr are strong—they have killed the red beast and the tiger!"

The thicket kept its secret. Not a sound excepting the light sough of the breeze, the droning of the flies and the far off song of a bird broke the silence. Aoun grew impatient.

"The Oulhamrs have the noses of jackals and the hearing of wolves! Two Men of the Forest are hidden among the mastic trees."

Yellow-headed cranes fluttered down close to a lotus-covered pool, a hawk hovered above the crests of the trees, and the glaring sunlight, which burnt up the grass, revealed a herd of graceful antelopes passing in the distance. Fear, prudence or cunning counselled the unknown beings to keep silence.

Aoun had fitted an arrow to his bow. Thinking better of

it, he gathered some thin branches and trimmed them. Zouhr did the same.

When they had finished their work they did not at once make up their minds as to further action. Zouhr would have preferred to wait. Even Aoun was full of indecision. . . . The idea of latent danger became unbearable to him, he fitted one of the sticks to the bow and shot it off. It produced no effect. Three times they renewed their efforts without any more success. A dull cry was heard after the flight of the fifth missile; the branches were pushed aside, and a hairy being came into view in front of the mastic trees.

Like Aoun and Zouhr he stood on his hind legs, his back forming a convex arch; his shoulders, which inclined forwards, were nearly as narrow as those of the Wahs; his chest projected outwards like that of a dog; his thick head had an enormous mouth, and a retreating forehead, and his pointed ears were reminiscent of those of the jackal and also of those of men; a tuft of hair formed a crest on his skull, while a short bristly growth covered his sides; his arms were shorter than those of a monkey. The new comer held a pointed stone in his hand.

Shorter than the Oulhamrs, taller than the Red Dwarfs, he was muscular and wiry. For a moment his round eyes were fixed upon the warriors; the skin of his forehead swelled with fury; they heard the grinding of his teeth.

Aoun and Zouhr measured his height and watched his movements. Their last doubts vanished, the creature that stood before them was evidently a man. The stone which he held in his hand had obviously been cut; he stood more firmly on his hind legs than the Men-with-Blue-Hair; there was some indefinable quality in his gestures which is not to be found in the entellus, the rhesus, or even in the gibbons or the dryopithecus. . . .

Zouhr remained anxious, but the great Oulhamr, comparing the weapon of his adversary to his own club, spears and harpoons, and measuring his own tall straight figure against that crouching form, decided that he was the superior. He made a few steps towards the mastic bushes shouting. "The

son of Urus, and the son of Earth, do not wish to kill the Man-of-the-Forest!"

A hoarse voice answered him, which was like the growl of a bear, but it had some attempt at articulation. Another softer voice was heard, and at the same time a second form emerged from the covert. It was more lanky, the chest was narrower, the belly was swollen, the legs were knock-kneed, the round eyes were shifty, and an aggresive fear distended the jaws.

Aoun began to laugh. He displayed his weapons, and held up his muscular arms.

"How do the long-haired man and woman expect to fight against Aoun?"

His laugh astonished the others and lessened their fear. Curiosity appeared on their heavy faces, and Zouhr spoke gently, "Why should not the hairy men make an alliance with the Oulhamr and the Wah? The forest is vast, and there is abundance of prey."

He expected that they would not be able to understand, but he trusted like Aoun to the power of articulate speech. He was not mistaken; the hairy man and woman listened with great curiosity, which presently grew into confidence.

When Aoun was silent, they remained in a stooping posture, still listening intently; then the woman made some sounds which, though they were nearly akin to those of an animal, had a human rhythm about them. Aoun began to laugh again in a friendly manner, and throwing down his weapons, he made peaceful signs to the pair. The woman laughed in return, a stiff, broken, embryonic laugh, heavily imitated by the man.

Then the Oulhamr and the Wah approached the mastic trees. They went slowly halting at intervals, taking only their clubs with them. The others watched them approach with occasional starts of fear and preparation for flight; then the Oulhamr's laugh would reassure them. Finally they were within two paces of each other.

That was the dangerous and decisive moment. The flat faces of the aborigines once more displayed great mistrust;

their eyes rolled, their foreheads swelled. The man involuntarily lifted his stone, but Aoun stretched out his enormous club towards him and began to laugh again.

"What harm can the little pointed stone do to the big club?" he asked.

The Wah added in a low musical tone, "Aoun and Zouhr are neither lions nor wolves."

The anxiety of the others was already abating. The woman made the first advance. She touched Aoun's arm murmuring semi-articulate words. Then, as the danger had not materialized, it seemed impossible that it should do so. Animal confidence, which follows all harmless contact, began slowly to grow. Zouhr held out a slice of dried meat which the man devoured, while Aoun gave the woman a cooked root.

Long before the day was ended, it was as if they had lived months together.

The fire did not alarm their new companions. They watched it catch one stick after another, and soon became accustomed to warming their limbs at it. The cool wind had subsided. The heat of the soil rose rapidly through the pure light air towards the stars. The wanderers were pleased to see the strange beings sitting near the fire. It reminded them of evenings with their horde, and they felt the sense of security engendered by numbers.

Zouhr tried to understand the strange sounds and gestures of their new companions. He had already made out that the man was known by an appellation which sounded like Rah, and that the woman answered to the cry of Wao, and he tried to learn whether there were other men in the forest and whether they formed a horde. Several times the newcomers' gestures seemed to coincide with their own, but it was only a glimpse of real understanding and soon disappeared or became uncertain.

During the following days the friendship grew closer. The hairy man and woman did not distrust them. A habit had established itself in their brains, which were more embryonic than those of Aoun and Zouhr. There was in them a native

gentleness, and a tendency towards submissiveness which was only changed to brutality by fear or anger. They gave way before the big Oulhamr's ascendancy and Zouhr's subtle patience. Their sense of smell was equal to that of the son of Urus. In addition to this they were nyctalopes and could see as distinctly as a panther in the dark. The rhesus and entellus monkeys hardly surpassed their agility in climbing trees. They ate meat readily, but they were able to keep themselves alive on leaves, young stalks, grasses, uncooked roots, and mushrooms. They could not run as fast as Aoun, but about equalled Zouhr. Their muscular strength surpassed that of the Wah, but was far inferior to the big Oulhamr's. They had no weapons except their pointed stones, which they used also to cut stalks and bark, and they did not know how to make a fire or keep it up.

In old days, in the tertiary forests, their Lemurian ancestors had invented speech and cut the first stones. They had spread themselves over the world. While some were learning to make use of fire, and others discovered the art of extracting it from stones and dry wood; while tools and weapons were being perfected by cleverer hands than theirs, they themselves, having led an easier and more abundant life, remained always the Lemurian men of ancient days. In the course of ages their speech had hardly changed, though it had perhaps lost a few of its articulate sounds; their gestures remained stationary, and though they could adapt them partially to new conditions they lost in doing so some of the qualities they had possessed in the past.

As it was they could hold their own against the leopard, the panther, the wolves and the dholes, who rarely attacked them. Their agility in climbing put them out of the power of the lion or the tiger, whose presence they smelt far off. Their aptitude for nourishing themselves with various kinds of food made them almost ignorant of hunger. Even in winter they discovered many useful roots and mushrooms without much difficulty. They were not called upon to endure the terrible cold to which the Oulhamrs, the Wahs, the Red Dwarfs and the Kzamms were subjected on the other side of the

mountains, in the lands of the North and of the setting sun.

Notwithstanding this their race was becoming extinct, after having inhabited many different forests and jungles.

Mysterious causes had destroyed it in the East and the South.

Other and stronger men, who could make better use of articulate speech, fashion more formidable weapons and employ fire, had pushed back the Lemurian men to the plateau. For a thousand years the conquerors of the plain had only attacked it two or three times in each generation, and had not remained there. The primitive men fled to the recesses of the forest at their approach. These were periods of horror, the recollection of which was deeply engraved on the instinct rather than the brains of the race, and they were the only times when the life of the lemurians became sad. . . .

Rah and Wao knew nothing of these vicissitudes. They were young and had not suffered from an invasion. They had seen the fires of a camp two or three times at the extreme end of the plateau. It was a vague picture which revived in their minds when they saw Aoun and Zouhr's fire.

Zouhr and Wao began to understand each other better and better. The Wah now knew that there were other Lemurian men in the forest and he had warned Aoun of it. The son of Urus received the news unconcernedly. He thought that as he had made an alliance with Rah, there would not be war between him and the others, and he also imagined they would not dare to fight him. Zouhr did not share his unconcern. He did not imagine that the Lemurians would be inclined to fight—Rah and Wao did not hunt any dangerous beasts—but he feared they might think they were attacked.

One night the fire was burning brightly among the dry sticks. Rah and Wao looked at it with beatitude and, instructed by Zouhr, amused themselves by throwing on branches. The hunters had spitted a haunch of fallow deer, which began to spread abroad the intoxicating scent of roast meat. Mushrooms were cooking on a flat stone. Through the

leafy arcades the horns of the waxing moon could be seen among the stars. When the food was ready Aoun gave a portion to the Lemurians, and divided the rest with his companion. Although their shelter was not very good, they felt secure. They were surrounded by trees the trunks of which were too high for tigers to scale, and in which they could take refuge before a carnivore could get near enough to attack them.

It was a pleasant time. No feeling of mistrust divided the wild beings: inoffensive to each other, ready to combine against any surprises from without, they enjoyed the great happiness which belongs to healthy bodies, repose, and abundant food. . . . Suddenly Aoun and Rah, then Wao, started. A furtive smell was borne past them.

Rah and Wao gave a kind of laugh; the Oulhamr said anxiously to Zouhr, "More men are approaching us."

The Wah turned towards the woman. She bowed her head, her nyctalopic eyes were fixed on the darkness. He touched her shoulder and questioned her by voice and signs. The question which he put to her was plain, events made it still plainer. Wao nodded her head, held out both arms, and made an affirmative sound.

"Aoun is right," said the son of Earth, "other Men of the Forest have come."

The Oulhamr rose up; Rah crawled in the grass; there was an anxious moment. Mistrust made Aoun set his jaws, and Zouhr depress his eyebrows. Rah however had begun to move on. Zouhr called him back; the Lemurian's face was undecided, and his appearance was that of a man who hesitates. He would have liked to bound towards his kind, but he was afraid of Aoun.

After a pause the son of Urus seized his weapons and walked in the direction from whence the smell came. It became stronger and multiplied. The warrior counted that there must be six or seven men in the grove; he accelerated his pace. At one moment the emanations seemed quite close, then they scattered. In the grey light which filtered through the branches the Oulhamr thought he distinguished the

outline of figures. They disappeared immediately. The warrior ran as quickly as possible, delayed sometimes by the brushwood. Suddenly he stopped: a sheet of water two hundred ells broad stretched out before him; frogs leapt into it, and others set up their senile croaking among the lotus leaves; the waxing moon threw a long track of shining light on the water. . . .

On the other bank, several forms bounded up one after another, as if they had sprung from among the water weeds. Aoun addressed them,

"The son of Urus and the son of Earth are the allies of the Hairy Men."

The fugitives paused to look at Aoun when they heard his resounding voice. Then they made a dull threatening clamour and shook their sharpened stones. They were about to resume their way towards the South when Rah intervened in his turn. His voice answered those of the men of his race. He shewed them Aoun and then put both his hands on his breast. Shrill voices resounded in answer and arms gesticulated wildly. With their nyctalopic sight the fugitives could see the Lemurian and the Oulhamr as plainly as by daylight; Rah missed nothing of the dumb show of his people.

When Wao and Zouhr appeared the clamour became louder. Then there was a kind of pause.

"How did the Hary Men pass over the pool?" exclaimed Aoun.

The Wah turned towards Wao, and succeeded in making her understand the question. She began to laugh and dragged Zouhr away to the left. Then, under the transparent water, he saw a grey line and Wao, in response to a sign, quitted the bank. She stepped into the water up to her thighs and began to walk along a sort of causeway under the water. Aoun followed without any hesitation; Rah preceded Zouhr.

For a moment the Lemurians on the other bank remained motionless, then they were seized with panic, and a woman having given the signal they took to flight. . . . Rah spoke to them in sharp tones. A male, the most thick-set of the troop,

stopped first; by degrees they all ceased to flee. They could be seen forming a long zigzag line.

When Aoun landed there was another panic, which was quickly arrested. Rah, having landed in his turn took the initiative. The thick-set man waited. It was an exciting moment. All the Lemurians fixed their eyes on Aoun's great height. Those who had met the Men-of-the-Fire did not remember ever having seen so tall a man. The picture of implacable massacres rose before them; remembering defeat their bodies shook with terror. By degrees, as Rah continued his signs, they were reassured. The thick-set man, after recoiling at first, allowed Aoun to place his hand on his shoulder. Zouhr, who had just landed, made the signs of alliance which he had learnt from Wao. Then these poor creatures were carried away by their joy, and also perhaps by a kind of pride that they should ally themselves with this giant, who surpassed in size the most terrible of their vanquishers. The women were the first to join the thick-set man; Aoun laughed his great laugh, full of the joy he felt at once more forming part of a horde, after so many days spent away from his own tribe.

THE MEN-OF-THE-FIRE

For several weeks Aoun, Zouhr and their allies wandered in the forest. They lived a life of abundance and ease. The Lemurians were clever at discovering springs of fresh water, detected the presence of wild beasts a great way off, and knew how to dig up edible roots and extract the pith of the sago palm. Round the fire in the evening a sense of complete security reigned. The little horde defied attack; Aoun and Zouhr had cut axes and clubs for their companions, which after a time they wielded skillfully. They all seemed ready to defy the carnivores, under the able leadership of the Oulhamr. They were of a gregarious nature like the entellus monkeys, and became formidable when inspired with confidence. Little by little Aoun gained complete ascendency

over them. They had a naïve love and admiration for his colossal chest and irrestible arms; his thunderous voice moved them to laughter; in the evening, when the coppery gleam of the fire danced on the grass and under the arches of the trees, they crowded round the Oulhamr shouting for joy. Everything that terrified them about the Men-of-the-Fire was changed to a sense of security. . . . Zouhr's presence was almost equally agreeable to them. They realized his ingenious cunning and knew that the giant listened to his counsels; he understood their signs and confused speech. There was, however, a kind of equality between Zouhr and them; they liked him in almost the same manner that they liked one another, while their predilection for Aoun was more in the nature of worship for a superior being. . . .

As they advanced further towards the south, the Lemurians displayed hesitation, which almost took on the appearance of fear. Wao explained that they were nearly at the end of the forest. The plateau sloped down hill; the heat became greater; palm trees, lianas, banyans and bamboos began to be more numerous again.

One afternoon they were stopped by a declivity which was almost perpendicular. A torrent ran through a narrow valley. On the other side the bank sloped upward without attaining so great a height as that on which the wanderers stood. They could distinguish a large savannah interspersed with groups of trees.

The Lemurians, who had remained crouched among the bushes, looked at the savannah with shifting eyes. Zouhr having interrogated Wao, said to the son of Urus, "It is the land of the Men-of-the-Fire!"

Aoun gazed at it with fierce curiosity.

Zouhr added, "When they come into the forest, they kill the hairy men and eat them, as if they were spotted deer or antelopes."

Then anger rose in the Oulhamr's breast, for he remembered the Kzamms, who were men-devourers, from whom Naoh had reconquered the secret of fire.

The place was well suited for their encampment. There

was a long cave in the rock, easy to defend against wild beasts or men, and a clear space in front of it where a fire could be lit which the thick brushwood would render invisible from the other bank. With the assistance of the Lemurians, Aoun and Zouhr fortified the entrance to the cave. When evening came it was strongly protected and would resist the attack of thirty men.

The son of Urus said, "Aoun, Zouhr and the Hairy Men are stronger than the Men-of-the-Fire!"

He began to laugh, his ringing victorious laugh, and his gaiety spread among the others. The sun's scarlet disc was reflected back from the waters of the river; the clouds were filled with trails of glory: they were like those red rocks which rise in the North of the Wah's country, and stood out from purple moors and abysses of sulphur. The fire was magnificent among the lengthening shadows. A cool breeze helped to kindle the branches and bark; a whole antelope was roasting for the horde; the Lemurians cooked their roots, their beans and their mushrooms under Zouhr's directions. . . .

As the repast ended, Rah, who was near the brushwood, started up suddenly, making confused sounds. His arm was stretched out towards the opposite bank.

Aoun and Zouhr penetrated into the thicket and stood aghast: to the left of their encampment, but on the other bank, a fire began to glow. . . . It was still very feeble, and the branches and twigs were not yet well alight. Then it caught on and flames burst out. A red smoke hung about it. The flames grew and seemed to conquer the darkness; their light was thrown over the steppe; black or copper coloured forms were indistinctly visible, their colour varying according to whether they passed on one or the other side of the fire.

All the Lemurians had followed Aoun. They watched their enemies' movements with feverish anxiety, gazing between the interstices of the brushwood. At intervals a shudder of fear crept over them. The oldest among them remembered wild flights, and saw again in imagination their companions being killed by spear-thrusts or blows from a hatchet.

As they looked, Aoun was able to take in the scene better.

The Men-of-the-Fire were preparing portions of game and roasting them at the flames. There were seven of them, all males. No doubt they formed one of those hunting expeditions which were frequent among the Oulhamrs, the Red Dwarfs, the Kzamms and in old days among the Wahs. One of them was warming the point of a spear at the fire so as to harden it. It did not seem as if they were aware of the presence of another fire. Their encampment was situated lower down than that of Aoun and Zouhr. The brushwood formed an almost impenetrable curtain. Soon, however, Aoun guessed that they had noticed something. Now and then one or the other would turn towards the rock plateau and look hard at it.

"They see the light of our fire," said Zouhr.

Their calm surprised him. Perhaps they thought that the encampment was occupied by men of their horde. He interrogated Wao. She pointed to the river, then to the descent on their side and the ascent on the other, and made him understand that there was no way of getting across, unless by going round a long way. The current was so strong that no man or beast could swim across the river. It would be necessary to walk till day-break to reach the enemy's camp. Security for both sides was complete for the moment.

Aoun observed these beings for a long time. They were nearer to his race than the Lemurians, and yet they more resembled the Kzamms than the Oulhamrs. Despite the distance he could see their short legs, and note that their bodies were thicker than they were broad, but he could not make out their heads, which were narrower than those of the Men-Devourers, their heavy jaws, and their enormous arched eye-brows.

"The Men-of-the-Fire will not attack us tonight!" affirmed Aoun, "Will they dare to attack us to-morrow?"

His bellicose heart did not shrink from battle; he was confident of victory. Though the Lemurians might be weaker than their enemies, they outnumbered them, and the Oulhamr counted on his own strength and Zouhr's cunning.

He asked, "Have the Men-of-the-Fire, spears and javelins?"

The question was put to Wao by the son of Earth; she

took some time to understand it, then she enquired of one of the oldest of her companions.

"They fling stones," said Zouhr when he had unravelled the meaning of the Lemurian's gesticulation.

"And they do not know how to extract fire from stones!" exclaimed Aoun joyously.

He had succeeded in making out two small fires, at a little distance from the big fire, which burned in cages of stone. If their fire were extinguished by their enemies, as had happened to the Oulhamrs before Naoh brought back the secret from the Wahs, they would be forced to return to their horde.

The night was peaceful. Aoun, who took the first watch, found his task of observing the enemy all the easier because the moon set later than the evening before. Two Lemurians watched with him. They had learnt the need for vigilance and they relieved one another naturally when any danger threatened. Nothing alarmed them more than the proximity of the Men-of-the-Fire.

When it was Zouhr's turn to watch the moon had set and the fire on the opposite bank only threw pale glimmers. All the warriors were asleep except one, who could be seen walking up and down in the half light. Soon Zouhr could no longer see him, but the nyctalopic eyes of Rah continued to follow him despite the distance. . . . The night wore on. Hundreds of stars had set in the west, others continued to shine, mounting ever higher in the sky. One red star only remained motionless in the north. Towards dawn the mist formed on the river and gradually veiled the opposite slope. The encampment of the Men-of-the-Fire became invisible.

The fog remained until after day-break, when the morning breeze made rents in it, and the sun evaporated it. Gradually they could see the opposite shore. First only the crest was visible, then the mist rolled back, in long trails, and allowed the whole slope to come into view once more.

The Lemurians gave a kind of wail; there were no more Men-of-the-Fire! Only a few ashes and blackened marks shewed where they had camped.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY

Aoun, Zouhr and the Lemurians spent a great part of the day fortifying the cave in such a manner as to render it impregnable. The precautions which sufficed to defend it against carnivores, who would always end by going away, were insufficient as a defense against men. The Oulhamr and the Wah knew well that the Red Dwarfs or the Kzamms were capable of besieging their enemies for weeks together. If they shut themselves up in a cave, surrounded by numerous adversaries, it meant condemning themselves to death. Against a dozen enemies however—and they had only seen seven on the previous evening—the cave might serve as a trap.

They killed several antelopes in the afternoon, the flesh of which was to be dried by the fire and in the sun; the Lemurians collected provisions of vegetables.

At the same time they all kept a good look out. It came naturally to them as it did to the dholes and jackals. The position was a difficult one to invade: to the South there was the river and the rocks; to the East a long moor, and to the West marshy ground. There was only one way which was really accessible, that of the forest, which stretched away backward, but which left space between it and the cave which was easy to watch. In fact no surprise attack was possible. In order to reach the shelter the Men-of-the-Fire would have to traverse from five to nine hundred paces of open ground, which could be swept by arrows, javelins and spears.

Until evening no suspicious smell presented itself to give warning of an enemy's approach. At twilight the Lemurians dispersed in a radius of about three thousand ells. Aoun climbed on to the highest rock, but could not discover anything. If the enemy had returned he must still be at a great distance.

The Oulhamr began to be reassured. He said to Zouhr, "The Men-of-the-Fire were only seven; they have gone away."

He meant to convey that the existence of so great a fire

must have made their pursuers think that they were a group of men numerous enough to defend themselves. Zouhr remained anxious. He had more foresight than the Oulhamr, and even perhaps than all other men of his day, and was a prey to undying distrust on account of the annihilation of his race by the Red Dwarfs. He replied, "If they have not returned it is because they have gone to fetch the warriors of their horde!"

"Their horde is far away," said the Oulhamr unconcerned, "Why should they return?"

"Because the Men-of-the-Forest do not know how to light a fire. They will want to know what new men are in the forest."

Aoun was impressed by this answer, but having disposed the watchers so as to guard against all surprises he was reassured. As usual he took the first watch. The waxing moon, which grew ever bigger and gave increasing light, would not set till about the middle of the night. This circumstance, which was important to Aoun, mattered little to the nyctalopic Lemurians, who had rather the advantage in the darkness. Nothing beyond the occasional sound of some wild beast hunting broke the stillness in the depth of the night. Aoun, seated by the fire, neither thought nor dreamed; only his senses were alert. The three Lemurian watchers were still more somnolent, but the slightest suspicious odour would have made them start up . . . Their sense of hearing and of smell, which was as infallible as that of the dholes, stretched over their surroundings like a network of fine wires.

The moon had accomplished two-thirds of its course when Aoun lifted his head. He saw that the fire was reduced to red embers, and mechanically he threw on an armful of wood. Then, sniffing the air uncertainly, he looked at the watchers. Two of them had sat up and the third soon followed their example.

A faint scent came from the forest. It so much resembled the smell of the Lemurians that Aoun thought it must mean that some of the prowlers of that race were near. He walked towards Rah; Rah was listening with all his ears, his wide

nostrils were distended, and his shoulders shivered nervously. When Aoun got near to him, he extended his hand towards the forest, stammering incomprehensible syllables. Aoun understood that the Chellian[1] men were there!

Hidden in the dense thickets, they could see the fire, they could see the Oulhamr, while they themselves remained invisible.

An immediate surprise did not, however, seem possible. All round the cave there was short grass, the even expanse of which was only broken by an occasional isolated tree or a thin clump of bushes.

Aoun's sharp eye could see all the details of the position as it lay in the grey light of the moon. He was bursting with daring, and had great difficulty in restraining himself from giving his war-cry. Hate boiled up within him, because the Men-of-the-Fire had crossed the river and skirted the moor in order to attack the encampment. They had thus displayed their tenacity, courage and hostility.

Before awakening Zouhr he prowled round the area which surrounded the cave, trying to locate the emanations and to make out the number of the enemy. He held a bow in his hand, two javelins and a harpoon were hung round his shoulders. He desired to entice the Chellians out of the forest; for as they only knew how to throw stones with their hands, he could kill or wound several of them before they were near enough to wound him in return.

The Lemurians came out of the cave one by one, having become aware of an unwonted presence, Zouhr accompanied them. Thanks to Wao, he at once knew the danger.

The great Oulhamr gazed alternately at his allies and the moving bushes. Those who were concealed in them could not number more than seven. He had eight men on his side,

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[1] Name given by the French anthropologist G. de Mortillet, to the first epoch of the Quaternary period. The word is derived from the town of Chelles, in the Department of Seine-et-Marne, where human remains of that epoch have been found.

four women who were almost as good as the men, besides himself and Zouhr. If the Lemurians displayed courage, the chances were on the side of the allies. It was however obvious that the greater number of them were so terrified that they would not stand before a determined attack. Only the thick-set one, Rah, Wao and a young man with eager eyes shewed any courage.

"Are there as many warriors as there were round the fire yesterday?" asked Zouhr.

"There are no more!" replied Aoun, "Should I shout my war-cry?"

Zouhr preferred an alliance to a battle. He said finally, "The forest is vast. . . . The prey is sufficient for all. May Zouhr speak to the Men-of-the-Fire?"

Despite his irritation Aoun accepted the proposal, and Zouhr lifted up his voice and spoke in musical tones, which made his utterance even more gentle than usual, "The son of Urus and the son of Earth have never fought with the Men-of-the-Fire! They are not their enemies."

The forest remained silent. Aoun called to them in his turn, "Aoun killed the tawny beast! Aoun and Zouhr killed the tiger . . . They have clubs, and spears and javelins! If the Men-of-the-Fire desire war, not one of them will live to return to the horde."

Only the gentle sough of the breeze was heard. Aoun took a hundred steps towards the forest and his voice rang out more loudly, "Will not the Men-of-the-Fire reply?"

Now that he was closer to them their smell became plainer. Knowing that he was being watched, he was seized by a growing fury. Beating his chest with his fist, his cry went up like the sound of wolves howling.

"Aoun will slit your bodies from top to bottom; he will give your carcases to the hyenas."

A kind of growl re-echoed from the sombre arches. The Oulhamr took another hundred steps. He was now only three hundred ells from the edge of the forest. He called to Zouhr not to follow him, and threatened, "The son of Urus will crush your faces!"

He hoped that the enemy, seeing that he was isolated from his band, would take the offensive.

For a moment the smell of the aggressors seemed to come closer, then it seemed farther off. Aoun, having advanced another hundred-and-fifty ells, drew himself up to his full height. He could have sent an arrow into the wood.

A cry of alarm rang out. Three men appeared suddenly from behind an advanced bush. They started to run across the open space in a transverse direction, so as to cut off Aoun's retreat. The wanderer saw them. . . . With a defiant laugh, he retired slowly, having slipped an arrow into his bow. . . . At the same moment three other men appeared on the right. . . . Terror made the hearts of the Lemurians sick. Half the band scattered, but Rah, Wao, the adolescent, the thickset man and a grey headed one stood firm. Wao even ran to call back a woman who was escaping to the forest.

The six Chellians tried to join forces, so as to cut off the Oulhamr's retreat. The bow twanged, an arrow was planted in the shoulder of an aggressor; Zouhr and Rah feigned an attack. Surprised at the distance from which the Oulhamr had struck, marvelling to see the Wah leading the Lemurians, and fearing a surprise, the Men-of-the-Fire retreated.

Those on the right had captured Wao.

PART IV

THE TRUCE was short lived. Rah gave vent to furious lamentations; the abduction was intolerable to Aoun, to whom it seemed like a defeat; even Zouhr forgot all prudence. Five of them began a pursuit.

The scent had disappeared, as the abductors had gone down wind. For a little while it was impossible to detect it. When the pursuers winded it again the Men-of-the-Fire had a long start; the trail which the Oulhamr's band picked up among the thickets and marshes was difficult to follow and only became clear after they had made many detours.

A fierce ardour animated the big Oulhamr. Confident in his own strength he advanced far ahead of his companions. Zouhr and Rah tried to follow him; the thick-set Lemurian displayed endurance and tenacity. . . .

At last the scent became stronger, and the trail, after leading them into the forest, took the direction of the river. Then it diverged and the son of Urus hesitated, finally choosing the trail in which the smell of Wao mingled with that of her captors.

The trees grew more sparsely; a plain covered with dry grass spread out before them, and a flame shot up which ran along the open space. Aoun was forced to retreat towards Zouhr. A sharp cry was heard, and after leaping up in several places the fire died down. Aoun and his companions continued their way Southwards; all trace of the trail was lost.

When they emerged from the forest the moor stretched drearily before them, and at a distance of two thousand ells they saw the light of a fire. Seated on a stone a man was watching. He rose to his feet as he caught sight of the pursuers. Six other men appeared at almost the same moment; they were dragging Wao along, and one of them was walking painfully, holding his hand to his shoulder. . . .

Aoun began to run forward again. He bounded along for about fifteen hundred ells, then stopped with a cry. A gulf lay before him, a deep fissure in the ground, at the bottom of which raged a torrent. . . . The Men-of-the-Fire hooted at him and laughed derisively.

The distance which separated Aoun from the fire was four times greater than the flight of an arrow. Deep disappointment took possession of the wanderer; he met the mocking laugh of his adversaries with shouts of hate.

They arrayed themselves in force, superior in numbers and full of disdain for Aoun's allies. The Lemurians were less to be feared than wolves; Zouhr with his barrel-like body and short arms seemed despicable to them; only the big Oulhamr surprised them. Were they not, however, in their unconquered might, themselves endowed with the strength of the bear? . . . Less tall than Aoun, their chief had a broad chest and long arms, strong enough to suffocate a panther . . . He turned his enormous face towards the son of Urus, and laughed in a sinister fashion.

Large blocks of stone lay scattered round the fire, thus strengthening the position of the Chellians. All the advantage was on their side, excepting the missile weapons. Aoun saw this plainly and Zouhr was even better aware of it, but they were both over-excited. The Wah had conceived a kind of tenderness for the Lemurian woman; Aoun was smarting under a sense of defeat. They remained on the alert, however. . . . Darkness was coming on. The red disc of the moon was already disappearing in a cloud which grew ever larger in the West. A rough wind blew in gusts. Suddenly the son of Urus made up his mind. He skirted the edge of the abyss

and returned to the forest. At the end of about two thousand steps, the fissure contracted, then it disappeared.

"I will go first," said Aoun to his companion. "You will follow me at a distance, until the fire is in sight. The Men-of-the-Fire will not take me by surprise. Their pace is not as rapid as mine."

When he emerged again upon the moor the Chellians had not moved. Three of them stood among the interstices of the boulders and gazed into the distance; the others were near the fire. They all had javelins, hatchets and stones ready to throw. When they saw Aoun appear, they howled like dholes and the chief, lifting his spear, made as if to attack him. The Oulhamr slackened his pace. He knew well it was useless to think of an assault; he cried out, "If you will give up Wao to us, we will let you return to your hunting grounds."

They could not understand his words, but his gestures, which were the same as those of all nomads, made them aware that he was reclaiming their captive. A surly laugh was the reply. The broad chested chief seized Wao by the hair and felled her to the ground by a blow on the head with his fist. Then, pointing in turn to her prostrate form the fire and his own jaws, conveyed to Aoun that the Chellians would roast and devour the woman's body. . . .

Aoun bounded like a leopard. The Men-of-the-Fire disappeared behind the boulders. Meanwhile Zouhr was approaching. When the companions were within an arrow's flight of the enemy the Wah said, "Let Aoun go to the right, some of those who are hiding will become visible."

The Oulhamr went to the right of the fire. Two of the Chellians, seeing that they were discovered, tried to retreat. A spear whistled through the air, and a loud cry rang out in the stillness.

The Wah shot in his turn, and a second Chellian sank to the ground, hit in the thigh.

"The Men-of-the-Fire have now three wounded," shouted the Oulhamr's ringing voice.

The black storm-clouds mounted ever higher; the men were enveloped by the eternal forces of earth and sky as it

were in deep, intangible, fierce waves. The Moon had disappeared, there was now only the waning glow of the fire and dazzling flashes of lightning. The Chellians had become invisible, fearing to expose themselves to the enemy's spears and javelins; the Oulhamr, the Wah and the Lemurians realized the impossibility of attacking an enemy entrenched behind masses of rock.

There was a pause in the mysterious rolling of the storm. The wind had fallen, thunder was not yet heard; the animals couched in the forest were still. Then the clouds growled like a drove of aurochs; water, the mother of all, began to fall in heavy drops, and fury seized upon the Chellians. Their fire would be put out; they could not protect it even in the stone cages where they preserved it for future use; they would find themselves on the savannah and in the forest in no better case than a pack of wolves.

The chief issued orders. The Men-of-the-Fire attacked, all shouting together. Four of them, two being the wounded men, directed their steps towards Zouhr and the Lemurians. The deep-chested chief and the strongest warriors bounded towards Aoun. Two arrows whistled past them, followed by two others, which the darkness and the pace of the assailants rendered ineffectual. Aoun retreated towards the river, in order to gain time to enable him to fling his spears, while Zouhr and the Lemurians turned towards the forest.

The spears only inflicted slight wounds: the Chellians quickened their pace, with cries of victory; the Oulhamr continued his retreat and the Wah was approaching covert. Suddenly water poured from the sky like a thousand torrents, the fire sputtered; only the warrior who was wounded in the thigh remained at the camp and protected the fire cages under the stones.

Zouhr and his party were surrounded. The youngest of the Lemurians, who was terrified, tried to flee to a tree for safety; his body was laid open by a javelin stroke and a stone crushed in his head. Rah and the thick-set man defended themselves with the clubs which the Oulhamr had fashioned for them; Zouhr felled the Chellian who was

wounded in the shoulder with a blow of his axe, but another came stealthily behind him, seized the Wah by the back of his neck and threw him to the ground.

As soon as Aoun saw that the aggressors were separated by a distance of fifteen ells, he made three enormous bounds and brought down his club.

The first blow shattered a javelin, the second split a man's head. The Chellian chief and the Oulhamr found themselves face to face. They were both of formidable build. That of the chief was reminiscent of the bear or the wild boar: woolly hair covered his body; his round eyes shot fire. Aoun was of taller stature, his broad chest did not resemble that of any animal, and his body was firmly poised on stout legs. He held his club in both hands. His antagonist's javelin was made of ebony wood, heavy and very pointed, capable of inflicting a deep wound or breaking a bone.

The Chellian struck first; and his weapon hardly touched the son of Urus. Aoun whirled his club. It only met the ground, while a growl burst from the Chellian's lips. His enormous face expressed hatred, murder and insult.

For a moment they watched one another, each of them having retreated a little. Torrential rain enveloped them in mist, the last embers of the fire gave hardly any light; each of the combatants felt death was passing near them as they heard the peals of thunder, and felt the moor tremble beneath their feet.

Aoun resumed the offensive. The club whirled and grazed the tawny body of the Chellian, while the sharp point of the javelin lacerated the Oulhamr's shoulder. Then their weapons became entangled. The javelin touched Aoun's chest at the moment when he was bounding back. Blood flowed from two wounds. Aoun, shouting his war-cry, seized the javelin with one hand and struck with the other. The blow descended full on the Chellian's head, and paralyzed him; a second blow broke his collar bone; more heavy blows were rained upon him and fractured his ribs. . . .

The fire had just gone out; darkness was over all. The flashes of lightning became more rare and feeble, and hardly

seemed to pierce the dense blackness. Aoun sought in vain for Zouhr and the Lemurians; the storm had blown away all odours.

He called "Where does Zouhr hide himself? the son of Urus has overthrown his enemies!"

He was answered by a far away growl, which came from the forest and did not at all resemble the voice of the Man-without-Shoulders. Aoun felt his way in the darkness or ran when the lightning flashed. The form of Rah emerged when he came to the border of the forest, then vanished in the shadows. The Lemurian stammered obscure words, and Aoun guessed that the Wah had disappeared. Sometimes a flash of lightning shewed him some gesture more expressive than words. At last the thick-set Lemurian appeared also. His attempts at explaining something he wished to say were even more confused than the stammering accents of the other.

All action was impossible. The men were enveloped in the unceasing rain; they were more powerless than insects hidden under leaves or in the hollow bark of trees, and the big Oulhamr was in the greatest distress he had ever known. His groans and lamentations rent the air, his chest heaved with great sobs, his tears mingled with the rain. His whole past was bound up with Zouhr. He had loved him since the days when Naoh had brought him back from the country of the Red Dwarfs. Just because Zouhr preferred him to all other beings, Aoun also preferred Zouhr. Sometimes he shouted a loud call and hope would cause his shoulders to heave. Hours passed; the rain ceased; a pale light shewed in the east; he could just see the body of the Man-of-the-Fire whom Zouhr had killed, the young Lemurian, whose mangled body was hideous to behold, and also the bodies of the chief and of the warrior whom Aoun had felled. Near the cinders of the burnt-out fire a Chellian lay groaning, his leg pierced by a spear. Wao lying crumpled up near a mass of rock, had fainted so long ago that she had not heard Aoun and Rah's calls. Weak and shivering she gave a hoarse laugh when she saw her companion and the son of Urus.

The Chellian threw himself in front of Aoun beseeching for

mercy. The gentleness for which his tribe reproached him inclined the son of Urus to pardon him. But two of the Lemurians were already striking the man with their clubs; they crushed his neck and fractured his skull. Aoun was indignant but he knew it was the law of war.

Wao, who had learnt the meaning of the Oulhamr's gestures better than Rah, remembered a few words which Zouhr had taught her. She listened to the Lemurians and made Aoun understand that the Chellians had carried off the son of Earth into the forest. But the rain had made it impossible for their nyctalopic eyes to see clearly at that time. Rah had lost his way, and so had the thickset Lemurian, who was also wounded and in a fainting condition. So the Wah's fate remained uncertain; hope and fear alternated in Aoun's breast. He sought for the trail all the morning. They might find it some distance off, or Zouhr might be dead. The Lemurians scattered in all directions; those who had fled on the previous day returned, and the help of so many sharp eyes and keen noses was inestimable. . . . Finally one party went up the river and the other took a downward course, and both were to cross to the other bank. Aoun was with those who went down stream. He walked two-thirds of the day and forded the river. . . . Wao stopped and gave a sharp cry: the trail was found! They saw the trace of footsteps in the clay, they detected Zouhr's presence.

Joy welled up in the heart of the Oulhamr, but it was at once mingled with fear. The trail was no longer fresh; the Chellians had passed in the morning, and it would be impossible to overtake them till the following day. Moreover it would be necessary that Aoun should go on alone. The Lemurians would be unable to keep up with him, even at a distance. He made sure that all his weapons were intact: three javelins recovered on the field of battle, two spears, his axe and club. He did not forget the flint and marcasite stone with which to make fire. . . . He stood still for a moment, with a beating heart; he felt a kind of tenderness for these feeble, badly-armed men, with their imperfect speech, and rudimentary gestures. They had hunted with him, lived by

his fire, and many of them had displayed real courage in the struggle with the kidnappers.

He murmured gently, "Rah, Wao and Olin are the allies of the Oulhamrs. . . . But the Men-of-the-Fire have a long start of us, and they go swiftly. . . . Aoun alone can overtake them."

Wao understood his signs and explained them to the others. Deep depression weighed down the Lemurians.

Wao wept and Rah made a sound like that of a wounded dhole when Aoun began to ascend the slope. They accompanied him to the crest where the plateau began. The Oulhamr sped away like a wolf; the Lemurians shouted after him, and he halted a moment to console them, "The son of Urus will see the Hairy Men again!"

Then he resumed his course. At times the trail became uncertain, then it was strong again. At the spots where, owing to the fugitives having halted for some time, the earth was impregnated with their effluvia, the wanderer found grasses which Zouhr had held for a long time in his hand and then had thrown away: Aoun recognized the Wah's subtle ruse. He was surprised that the Chellians had not killed their prisoner, who, being less active than they were, must hinder their flight.

He only halted twice to rest, and then for a very short time, until the evening. Then he continued to seek the trail by the light of the moon and stars. It grew ever more and more recent. When he lay down exhausted among the rocks however, he was still far from the fugitives.

He made the circuit of a little lake in the early dawn, and found himself back in the forest. More than once he was in doubt and missed the way, and towards mid-day, when he was about to rest, he was perturbed by a new discovery. The trail had become much plainer; a small hunting-party had joined those who were carrying off Zouhr, doubling their number. Aoun could even distinguish the way by which the newcomers had arrived. There were now six adversaries to fight and no doubt he was approaching the territory of the horde.

To fight seemed to be impossible. No Oulhamr other than Aoun or Naoh would have continued the pursuit. The son of Urus was carried away by an instinct which was stronger than prudence, and he relied partly on his fleetness of foot, which equalled that of the wild ass; the short-legged Chellians would never be able to catch him.

The hours slipped by; the second day was declining when, despite the numbers of those he was pursuing, Aoun found he had lost the trail at the passage of a river. As it was quite shallow the wanderer had crossed it without difficulty, but on the other side there was no trail. . . . He searched desperately: evening was far advanced and still he had discovered nothing. Then he sat down, tired out and wretched, with no courage left even to light a fire.

After a short rest, he started off once more. He traversed an uneven country where clear spaces alternated with woods, and here he became aware of slight odours, which a favourable wind rendered more intense. They were certainly the emanations of the Men-of-the-Fire and yet he seemed to perceive a difference. There was nothing to be betoken Zouhr's presence.

He picked his way carefully among the brushwood and the bamboos; crawled through the high grasses, and found himself close to those whom he sought. . . . A menacing sound made him start; two human forms rose up whose presence he had not expected, for the wind had carried their smell in the opposite direction.

They had seen him. It was necessary to be prepared to fight. The moon, already at the full, lit up the two forms vividly. He became aware that they were not men but women. Thick-set, short-legged, with the stout bodies and thick faces of the Chellians, they each held a long and heavy spear.

The Oulhamr women seldom bore arms. Although the wanderer had seen the Lemurian women almost equal to the males in strength, he was surprised to see these two forms in a threatening attitude. He felt no anger and spoke in friendly tones, "Aoun has not come to kill women."

They listened, their anxious faces cleared. Aoun began to laugh so as to further reassure them, then he advanced slowly, holding his club low. One of the women recoiled, and with a bound both of them took to flight, either from fear or in order to warn their companions. But their short legs could not compete with Aoun's long limbs: he caught them up and passed them. . . . Then they waited side by side, their javelins pointed towards him.

He shook his club unconcernedly murmuring, "The club would easily break the javelins. . . ."

With a movement in which there was more of fear than animosity, one of the women darted her weapon. Aoun turned it aside, and broke its point; then without retaliating he went on, "Why do you make war on the son of Urus?"

They understood that he had spared them and gazed at him abashed. The one who had not made use of her weapon, lowered her javelin and made signs of peace, which were soon repeated by the other. Then they resumed their way. Confident of his own powers and activity Aoun followed them. All three advanced against the wind to a distance of four thousand ells. They reached a place covered with ferns, where by the light of the moon the wanderer became aware of the presence of more women. . . . They had risen up when they saw the man, and were gesticulating and uttering cries, which were answered by the new arrivals.

For a time, Aoun feared a trap. He could have fled, the way was open, but fatigue, solitude and pain had made him listless. When anxiety awoke in him once more, he had already reached the camp, and the women had surrounded him.

There were twelve of them, including those that had brought in the wanderer; several children were among them, and two or three quite little ones lay asleep. Most of the women were young, heavily built, with enormous jaws, but one of them fascinated Aoun because she had the flexible figure of the daughters of Gammla, the most beautiful among the Oulhamr. A dazzling mane flowed over her shoulders, her teeth shone like mother of pearl. A gentle and

timid force penetrated the warrior's heart; brilliant memories awoke within him and united themselves to the fresh form of the stranger. . . .

The women drew their circle closer. One of them, with brawny arms and shoulders, was face to face with the son of Urus. Energy seemed to exude from her sparkling eyes, and her muscular cheeks. He understood that she was offering to make an alliance with him, and as he knew of no race in which men and women form separate hordes, he looked round for the male members of the tribe. Not seeing any he made gestures of acquiescence. They then all laughed and followed this up by friendly signs, which he understood better than those of the Lemurians.

Nevertheless they remained much astonished. They had never before seen a warrior of such great stature or one whose speech was so different from their own. Their horde only knew three kinds of human beings: those who formed the hunting-party whose prisoner Zouhr was; the Lemurians, whom they had seldom seen and whom they did not fight; and the beings of their own race, where the men and women did not usually intermingle, and whose marriages were consecrated by fierce rites. Even if Aoun had belonged to their own race, they would have rejected him or subjected him to hard trials. They only accepted him because they were attracted by the novelty of the adventure and because they were passing through an inauspicious time. Half of them had perished in consequence of various disasters or under the weapons of the Chellians; most of the children had died.

In addition, having lost their fire, they wandered miserably on the earth, crushed by the sense of their downfall and full of hatred against their enemies.

It was pleasant to them to have this tall stranger as an ally, for he seemed as strong as the gayals. After crowding round him for a long time, trying to understand his gestures and to teach him theirs, they finally understood that he was seeking for a companion whose trail he had lost. It was a satisfaction to them to know that the Oulhamr's adversaries were the same men that they themselves execrated. Aoun,

guessing that their fire had been put out, set himself to collect dry grasses. With the help of twigs and his stones he brought the flame to life. The younger ones leapt round him with enthusiastic cries, the words they pronounced, repeated in chorus, making a kind of chant. When the red life spread to the branches their cries became frenzied. Only the girl with the fine cheeks did not lift up her voice: she contemplated the fire and the wanderer in silent rapture, and when she spoke it was in a timid and seductive manner.

AT THE END OF THE LAKE

Every morning Aoun resumed his search for Zouhr's trail. The women followed him, full of an ever-growing confidence. By dint of taking part in the same acts and exchanging gestures they understood the Oulhamr's object quite clearly. He too became familiar with their signs. His strength and activity amazed them; they admired his weapons, especially his harpoons and spears, which killed animals at a distance. Weakened by misery and defeat, they rallied humbly round the stranger and liked to obey him. Their help was not to be despised. Four of them were more robust, lithe and swift than Zouhr; they were all capable of enduring great fatigue. Those who had little children could carry them all day without being tired. The boys and girls had the endurance of jackals.

Had it not been for the loss of Zouhr, their evenings would have been very pleasant. Every night, when Aoun struck sparks from the stones, the women shewed the same ecstasy as on the first occasion, and their joy delighted the big Oulhamr. Above all he loved to watch Djeha, with her long beatiful hair, her bright eyes reflecting the flames: he dreamed of returning with her to his native horde; his heart began to beat. . . .

At the end of a week the trees became still more sparse; a long steppe stretched out before them with only a few thickets, spinneys and brushwood to break the monotony.

They went forward in the hope of discovering a height from which they could scan the horizon. Towards mid-day, during the hour of rest, a woman who had wandered towards the east called the others. There was no need for explanations: they all recognized the traces of a fire.

"The Men-of-the-Fire!" said Aoun.

The women displayed great emotion. The one who was in command, Ouchr by name, turned towards Aoun with angry gestures: he understood that the Chellians were his companions' enemies. Not only had they been decimated by them, but no doubt the Chellians had also destroyed the male horde which was allied to the women, as it had not reappeared since the autumn.

The camp had been used several days before; there was no scent left to guide them. They took some time to assure themselves that it did not imply a numerous band; there was nothing to shew that Zouhr was with them. . . . Meanwhile, thanks to some slight indications, Aoun and the women were able to organize the pursuit. Little by little the trail became clearer: it was all the easier to follow because the Chellians were moving in an almost straight line towards the North. Twice the ashes of a fire shewed that their presence had been recent.

On the third morning, a young woman who walked at the head of their band turned round with an exclamation. When Aoun came up with her he saw the print of many footsteps in the light soil: he trembled with joy when he recognized the trace of Zouhr's. Indeed the pursuit was becoming easy: the soil revealed emanations, a proof that they were gaining ground. That night they prolonged their march, although the moon had not yet risen, for two of the women were nyctalopic, although to a less degree than the Lemurians. Their way was barred by a range of hills. They climbed half way up the highest of these, and Aoun lighted a fire in a dell, so that it might be invisible from a distance. The enemy's proximity demanded ever increasing prudence.

Aoun had killed a swamp-deer, and the women were busy roasting its quarters. The safety of their shelter, abun-

dance of food, and the brilliant fire-light, raised the spirits of the little horde. It was one of those happy interludes when human beings forget the cruel law of life and the snares of the world. Even the Oulhamr would have been blissfully happy had it not been for Zouhr's absence. Djeha of the fine eyes sat by him, and he thought vaguely that perhaps Ouchr, the woman chief, would give her to him in marriage. The rugged soul of the young Oulhamr was full of secret tenderness. When Djeha was near him he felt a dread which made his heart beat quicker: he wanted to be as gentle to his companion as Naoh was to Gammla.

When the children and those of the travellers who were most tired had fallen asleep after the evening meal, Aoun set out to climb the hill. Ouchr and Dejha rose to accompany him, as well as several of the other women warriors. It was not a difficult ascent, and they soon reached the crest of the hill. They had to go through some brushwood before they could see the other side. A long plain lay stretched out under the stars, and a lake shimmered almost at the foot of the slope.

At the northern end, but on the further shore, they saw the light of flames. Aoun's whole attention was concentrated on them. The fire lay about four or five thousand ells distant in a straight line, but they would have to go round by the shore of the lake and perhaps avoid some obstacles.

The wind blew from the South. They would therefore be able to approach the camp without being discovered. . . . They must get there before the moon rose, and only Aoun was swift enough to accomplish this.

He looked earnestly at the fire and the figures, sometimes purple and sometimes black, which hovered round it. There were five of them: the son of Urus could distinctly see Zouhr seated by the side of the lake, and a seventh man lying on the ground.

Then he said to Ouchr, "Aoun will go to the Men-of-the-Fire and demand Zouhr's freedom . . ."

Ouchr understood and replied, "They will not give up the prisoner. . . ."

The Oulhamr continued, "They took him away as a hostage, they were afraid of Aoun."

"They will dread him still more when they no longer have a hostage."

The wanderer remained undecided for a moment. He could see no other way by which he could deliver Zouhr than by cunning, violence or gentleness: in any case he must approach the Chellians' camp.

"Aoun must deliver his companion," he said darkly.

Ouchr agreed with him. She had nothing to say in reply. He added, "Aoun must go towards the fire!"

"Ouchr and the Wolf-Women will follow him!"

Aoun, after looking long at the plain, acquiesced, "The son of Urus will wait down there for the women to come," he said. "He will be alone, but the Men-of-the-Fire cannot reach him by running, and he can fight them at a distance!"

Ouchr commanded her youngest warrior to fetch reinforcements. The Oulhamr was already descending towards the plain. It was an easy slope, almost level, without crevices and covered with grass. When he reached the plain, the wind was blowing the odours towards the North and the lie of the ground favoured his enterprise. The moon was still hidden; he soon found himself on the same bank as the Chellians, less than a thousand ells from the camp. . . .

Clumps of trees, high grasses and low hillocks allowed him to continue his way unobserved for four hundred ells, but then he had to face open ground. Nothing could further conceal his movements from the piercing eyes of the enemy. A prey to anxiety, not for himself but for Zouhr, he remained motionless among the vegetation. Would the Chellians kill the Wah if Aoun appeared suddenly, or would they on the contrary spare his life, the better to preserve their own? If they offered them his alliance would they mock him?

He waited for a long time. The moon rose, red and misty, from the depths of the savannah. Five Chellians had lain down on the ground. The sixth was watching, sometimes standing up to listen, his mobile eyes and nostrils quivering. Zouhr was awake also, at the other end of the little camp, near

the fire. The Chellian took hardly any notice of the prisoner, who was neither strong nor active, and therefore could not think of flight.

A project haunted Aoun's imagination. He knew that Zouhr, so slow in running, was, like all the Men-without-Shoulders, a clever swimmer. He could outstrip the most active Oulhamr in a river or a pool; he could dive like a crocodile and remain a long time under water. If he leapt into the lake, he could reach the other shore, which at that point was not very far off. . . . Aoun would lure the enemy on to fight. It would, however, be necessary that the Wah should see him and understand his signal; the least alarm would make his rescue impossible.

Now the watcher looked chiefly towards the north, because of the wind. He turned his face every moment towards the bush which concealed the son of Urus. The moon rose ever clearer, brighter and more steely. The wanderer's breast was bursting with the fury of his impatience, and he was almost in despair, when a loud roar reverberated from the direction of the south, and the form of a lion was outlined on a hillock. The watcher gave a great start; the Chellians stood up round the fire and turned their faces towards the carnivore . . .

Zouhr, almost motionless, was peering in all directions, full of the desire for rescue, which was rendered keener by all the vicissitudes he had gone through.

Suddenly Aoun showed himself, his hand stretched out towards the lake . . . The moment was propitious: a distance of thirty ells separated the Wah from the nearest of his captors. They were thinking only of the great brute.

The lake was twenty steps from Zouhr. If he started promptly he could reach it before any of the Chellians.

Zouhr had seen the outstretched hand. Uncertain and puzzled, he walked furtively towards the bush. Aoun again pointed towards the lake; the Wah understood and began to walk carelessly in the direction of the water, then his step changed and with great bounds he leapt towards the bank.

Just as he flung himself into the water one of the Chellians

turned round. He was more surprised than anxious, he only gave the alarm when he saw the Wah striking out for the opposite shore. Two warriors gave chase, and one of them tried to catch Zouhr by swimming after him. When he found he could not overtake him, he returned to the bank and began to fling stones at him. Zouhr, having dived, was invisible.

The lion's proximity paralyzed the resolution of the band. One man alone was sent in pursuit. He thought that by running round the end of the lake he must inevitably meet Zouhr, who would be an easy capture, for he was unarmed, slow and weak of muscle.

Aoun, seeing the warrior come towards him, laughed silently and withdrew. He remained invisible for a little while, then an open bit of ground revealed him to the enemy. He waited with his spear held high in air. . . .

The Chellian was one of those who had fought in the stormy night. He recognized with great alarm the big wanderer who had killed his chief, and with a loud outcry he beat a retreat.

Aoun, who was anxious about Zouhr's fate, did not attempt to pursue him. He directed his steps to the end of the lake and went round the point. The Wah had not yet landed; he could see him swimming like a reptile with writhing movements. When he reached him the son of Urus lifted him up with joyful murmurs, and they remained looking at each other, dumb with the joy of his deliverance.

At last the Oulhamr shouted his triumph, "Aoun and Zouhr mock the Men-of-the-Fire."

Meanwhile the lion had disappeared. For a moment the Chellians continued to watch the hillock, then, at a sign from their chief, they directed their steps towards the north.

"They are more active than Zouhr," said the Wah sadly, "their chief is as strong as a leopard!"

"Aoun does not fear him . . . and we have allies."

He dragged his companion along with him, and when the pursuers arrived at the turn of the shore a clamour arose

from the hill. Ouchr and seven other Wolf-Women had appeared; the Chellians, discouraged, gave up the pursuit.

The women came down to Aoun, and Ouchr said:

"If we do not kill the Dhole-Men they will return with their horde."

The Oulhamr understood her after she had repeated her gestures and phrases.

"Have they spoken of their horde?" he asked the Wah.

"It is two long days' marches from here," Zouhr replied, and after gazing at the women he added, "If we attack them they will kill many of the women, and some of them will doubtless succeed in escaping."

Aoun's blood boiled, but the fear of again losing his companion prevailed, and he also had a benevolent feeling towards the Chellians because they had not killed their captive.

THE FLIGHT FROM THE CHELLIANS

Aoun, Zouhr and the women were fleeing. They had been chased by the Chellian horde for more than a week. A woman had noticed them first, and Aoun, stationed on a high rock, had counted thirty men. The fugitives' march was delayed by the Wah, who could not go fast, but Ouchr knew of winding ways through the forest where Zouhr, aided by the marshy land, invented stratagems to lead the enemy astray. Every time they came across a shallow water course, they walked up or down its bed for some distance; on several occasions Ouchr and Aoun set fire to the dried grasses through which they had passed. So the Chellians lost their trail: but they were numerous and obstinate, and dispersed in different directions to find it again. On the eighth day, the band crossed the torrent on the bank of which Aoun had left the Lemurians. The Oulhamr would have liked to go up stream, but Ouchr pointed out a safer way, and they turned again towards the south of the plateau.

The day of the new moon came, and they had not seen the

Chellians. Their halt that day was a happy one. It was in the jungle, for gradually the fugitives had neared the plain and were approaching the river. Enormous bamboos surrounded the open space. There was still daylight, and men and women were busy cutting wood for the fire, and constructing a refuge with thorns, creepers and saplings. A red glow succeeded the amber light; a fine mist rose towards the clouds; wind murmured in the luxuriant vegetation and Aoun's soul was full of solemn yet gentle feeling. The same weakness that caused him to spare the life of his vanquished foes, made him tender in his manner towards Djeha of the supple shoulders. His strength became feeble in the presence of her magnificent hair, and the wonderful light in her eyes; her timidity was more intoxicating to him than victory. Fleeting dreams came to him, which he did not understand. Sometimes, when he reflected that Ouchr's consent was necessary, and the possibility of a refusal crossed his mind, the violent spirit of the Oulhamr possessed him and shook his whole being. In reality, however, he was prepared to submit himself to the customs of these women, who shared his perils.

When the stars came out above the bamboos, he went to the woman-chief, who was finishing her repast, and asked, "Will Ouchr give me Djeha to wife?"

When Ouchr understood she was undecided. The laws of her race were very old, and by dint of repetition they had acquired strength and preciseness. The women of the horde were not to unite themselves with the Chellians or the Lemurians. Disaster, however, had engendered profound uncertainty. Ouchr did not know if any men of their race still existed. And Aoun was her ally.

She answered, "This is what we will do: first we must escape from our enemies; then Ouchr will strike Djeha on the chest, and she shall be Aoun's wife."

The Oulhamr only understood a part of this reply; fervent joy took possession of his heart. He did not notice that Ouchr was sad; she did not understand why he preferred

this lithe young girl to the woman chief, of the muscular hands and heavy jaws . . .

They continued their flight next day, and the day after that. They were now quite close to the river. A line of rocks appeared, like those where the giant feline had his lair. There was nothing to indicate the presence of their enemies; even Ouchr began to think they had given up the pursuit. In order to make quite sure, she clambered up a high rock with Aoun and Zouhr, from which a good view of the surrounding country could be obtained. When they reached the top they saw the river winding round a bend between two steppes, then, still further off, some human beings on the edge of a jungle, who were advancing towards them.

"The Dhole-Men!" said Ouchr.

Aoun made sure that their number had not diminished, and said, "They are not following our trail."

"They will find it," said Ouchr.

Zouhr added reflectively, "We must cross the river!"

It was an attempt in which even the strongest swimmers could hardly hope to succeed; crocodiles abounded in the mud, on the islands and about the promontories. The Wahs, however, possessed the art of crossing water by means of big branches and split trunks of trees, bound together by creepers and withies. Zouhr led the troop down to the bank of the river, where black poplar trees abounded. Two trunks stranded in a cove made their work more rapid. Before midday the raft was ready, but the enemy was near. They could see their advance-guard at the turn of the river, three or four thousand paces off. When their improvised raft left the bank, the Chellians set up a great clamour. Aoun answered them with his war cry, and the women howled like wolves. The fugitives drifted obliquely from the shore. As they were being taken down stream they got closer to their enemies, and the two bands found themselves at last face to face. They were separated by a distance of only about two hundred ells. The Chellians were assembled on a promontory, to the number of twenty-nine, all thick-set, with dhole-like jaws and muscular hands. Their round eyes were lit up by a violently

ferocious light. Several of them made as if they would throw themselves into the water and swim after the raft, but a python and several crocodiles appeared among the lotus leaves.

Meanwhile Aoun and Zouhr and the women, with the aid of branches, changed the course of the raft. It passed between two islands, spun round, returned for a moment towards the bank where the Dhole-Men were standing, then took a south-westerly course . . . Ultimately it went aground on the opposite bank, and the women shouted insults at the Chellians.

The band plunged into the jungle until it was stopped by a tributary of the river. It was a shallow water course, the bed of which was easy to walk in. But before they started Zouhr made them cut into pieces the skin of a swamp deer, and he explained that when they left the river bed, each of them was to wrap up his feet in the bits of skin. They disembarked on a rocky cape and having all of them wrapped up their feet, they splashed water over their halting place.

"Zouhr, is the most cunning among men!" exclaimed the Oulhamr . . . "The Dhole-Men will think a herd has passed here!"

The Chellians had however so often recovered the trail that the fugitives thought it wise to walk on until nightfall without stopping.

PART V

IN THE DEFILE

THE GROUND became marshy. They had to plunge through mud, or toil along the bank. For two days the fugitives advanced no faster than creeping beasts. Then the river was locked between steep banks, and an enormous wall of schist barred their way. It was three thousand ells long, and six hundred high; to the West it rose out of the river, and on the East it was rooted in an impenetrable marsh. There was only one outlet, a narrow defile which was hollowed out at the height of two hundred ells, and access to which was gained by slopes interspersed with reddish masses of rock. Aoun, who was walking at the rear of the band, came to the entry of the pass, and stopped to consider the place. Meanwhile Ouchr had gone on. She soon returned and announced, "The marsh spreads out on the other side of the rock."

"We must cross the river again," said the Wah, who had followed the woman chief. "There are trees, we can make a raft."

Aoun gave an exclamation, and stretched out his hand. Men had appeared below them, between two pools. There were seven in number, and their appearance was too characteristic to leave any doubt as to their identity.

"The Dhole-Men!" cried Ouchr.

Their number continued to increase. Aoun's chest swelled. He sniffed the feverish breath of the marsh waters and gazed at the abyss.

"Long before the raft is built," he said, "the Dhole-Men will be upon us!"

Heavy stones lay around him. He rolled several of them to the entrance of the pass, while Ouchr, the Wah and the women carried others. . . . Between the two pools, they saw the Chellians crawling along. Death lay in the advance of those sombre figures.

Aoun said, "The son of Urus and three women will defend the pass. Zouhr and the other women will build the raft."

The Wah hesitated. He fixed his trembling eyes on his companion. The other, understanding his fear, added, "There are four spears, and two harpoons. I have my club and the women their javelins. If we are not strong enough, I will ask for assistance. Go, only the raft can save us."

Zouhr gave way. Aoun chose Ouchr and another deep-chested woman to remain with him. When he turned round to choose a third, he saw Djeha, who advanced towards him shaking her hair. He wished to put her aside, but she looked at him with eager gentleness. Love was upon him, the tender choice which, among the Oulhamrs, only Naoh had experienced. The old story repeated itself; he forgot peril and death.

The Dhole-Men approached. Having threaded their way between the pools they spread out over the rocky bank. One of them, whose body was as hairy as that of a bear, displayed enormous arms; he wielded without difficulty a spear which was heavier than Aoun's club. They scattered as they approached the mass of rocks, so as to discover a way round. There were several gullies hollowed out of the mass, but they all ended in perpendicular walls of rock; the defile seemed to be the only way out.

Aoun, Ouchr, Djeha and the third woman were completing its fortification; they also collected boulders with which to crush the assailants. There were two ways of gaining access to the pass: either directly by the bed of the water course through which the spring and autumn rains made their way, or obliquely through a labyrinth of boulders. The direct way would allow of an assault three or four men deep;

the roundabout way forced the besiegers to adventure themselves one by one, but the attack could be made from above on those below . . .

The Chellians stopped a hundred ells from the rock. They watched the movements of Aoun and the women; their large faces mocked them and their blue lips shewed brilliant white teeth. Suddenly they set up a lugubrious howling, which was reminiscent of the howling of wolves and dholes. Aoun displayed his harpoon and his club!

"The Oulhmars will take the Men-of-the-Fire's hunting grounds from them!"

Ouchr joined her hoarse voice to that of the son of Urus; she cried, "The Dhole-Men have massacred our brothers and sisters. Our allies will destroy the Dhole-Men down to the very last . . ."

Then there was a long silence. A warm damp wind came up from the marshes. Eagles and vultures hovered over the crests. Monstrous gavials could be seen on the islands; the sound of the river was heard in the vast solitude, fresh, living and unending as in the first days of the world . . .

The Chellians divided into two bands. The chief led the first among the maze of boulders; the others tried to reach the defile by the direct way, hiding themselves in the fissures and behind boulders . . .

Aoun's sparkling eyes counted the enemy. He lifted up his bow ready strung; Ouchr and her companions, at the first signal, were to stone the assailants . . . But they remained invisible or only appeared among obstacles which made it almost impossible to hit them. A Chellian did however shew himself; the bow twanged and an arrow pierced his ribs. Hoarse shouts were heard; the wounded man disappeared . . . Aoun was on the alert and was ready with a second arrow.

Soon they returned to the attack, especially those who were trying to make their way by the indirect road, where several warriors had reached the height of the defile. They could not be seen. To carry out their plan they would have to get even higher and scale a narrow ledge, from which they could jump down one by one . . .

Meanwhile the direct way was invaded; a powerful voice thundered and fifteen men hurled themselves forward in a furious dash. Arrows whistled, boulders were pushed down and rebounded, ferocious and plaintive cries re-echoed from the rocks . . . The Chellians had not been arrested in their course. Despite endless stones hurled at them and the flinging of a spear, they succeeded in getting to within eight ells of the pass. Three had rolled down into the ravine, two others were wounded; Aoun saw the mass of faces coming ever nearer to him; he could see the fire in their eyes and hear their panting breath. Then with a desperate effort he flung an enormous boulder, while the women made the stones roll wildly. A lugubrious howling resounded from the rocks; the besiegers retired falling over each other, and Aoun was about to detach another boulder when a stone hit him on the skull.

He lifted his head; a face surmounted by red hair mocked him; four forms bounded down in quick succession. Aoun had fallen back. He held his club in both hands. Ouchr and Djeha brandished their javelins. There was room for three pairs of combatants to meet face to face.

There was a momentary truce. Fear of the stranger kept the Dhole-Men motionless; Aoun pondered whether he should call for help. . . . He was confronted by the enemy chief, who stood before him a picture of massive strength. His javelin was an ell longer than that of his companions; power and the habit of victory seemed to exhale from his whole being . . .

He began the attack and his javelin tore Ouchr's side. But Aoun, with a weighty blow, beat down his weapon, and his club crushed the shoulder of a warrior who had sprung forward to assist his chief.

The man fell to the ground, and was at once replaced by another; new assailants came up from behind. Then Ouchr gave the cry for help, which was repeated by Djeha and the other woman, while the Chellians flung themselves upon them with wolf-like growls. The son of Urus struck down three javelins in as many strokes, breaking two of their points; Ouchr wounded a Dhole-Man in the chest, but the third woman sank down with a deep wound in her body . . .

The aggressors had recoiled before the colossal club. They were massed at the entrance to the pass; the chief with uplifted spear, stood an ell's length in front of his men, the places of those whose weapons were damaged being taken by others.

With a fierce laugh and grinding his teeth, while his piercing eyes kept watch on every moment of his adversary, the Chellian chief charged. The Oulhamr avoided him, but the javelin tore his thigh and he stumbled; the chief gave a victorious cry . . . He was answered by the club. The thick skull of the tawny man was cracked; he fell backwards with a hoarse cry into the arms of his companions.

For a moment the Chellians hesitated; but their numbers coninuted to grow, and they charged again. The terrible club broke the points of their javelins and crushed their chests; Ouchr and Djeha fought without ceasing. They were forced to give way however, being outnumbered, and they were nearing the point where the defile grew wider and the Chellians' attack would become more effective.

The son of Urus succeeded by an immense effort in breaking the javelins on every side of him, and the enemy became motionless . . . A furious clamour arose from the other end of the defile, the Wolf-Women appeared; twice Zouhr's bow twanged and his arrows were imbedded in the shoulders of the enemy. Aoun raised his club for a supreme blow.

Panic set in; the Dholes retired in a mass, dragging their wounded and even their dead with them; they overthrew boulders, rolled down the slope, took refuge among the rugged rocks and fissures. Only one dead man and one wounded one, who was groaning miserably, were left upon the ground. The women finished him off . . .

Uncertainty kept the besieged motionless at the entrance to the defile. The Chellians had once more become invisible; dead bodies lay among the blocks of schist.

Then the women became elated by victory. They stooped over the boulders, they shouted wildly. Aoun, despite his wounds, was filled with a proud joy. Was it not he who had broken the shock of the javelins, struck down the chief

and spread terror among the Dhole-Men? He had also saved Dheja from the javelin which was about to pierce her breast; his look met that of the woman warrior and a subtle emotion mingled with his triumph, in the presence of those beautiful dark eyes and that magnificent hair, which was more beautiful than the finest plants of the savannah or the jungle . . .

The Wah said, "Zouhr and the women have found wood in abundance . . . the raft is almost finished."

"It is well! The son of Urus will remain with six Wolf women to defend the defile . . . Zouhr will finish the raft with the others."

A sound of lamentation arose. The wounded woman felt a mysterious horror creeping over her, the icy breath of complete nothingness. Turning her dilated eyes towards the heavens, she saw great vultures and white headed crows hovering over the dead bodies . . . Her small and narrow soul swelled with an immense desire. The forests and clear dawns passed before her eyes, the days of abundant life, the evenings when the fire shed its warm life around it. The memory of the past was hers, that memory which is born of speech and resuscitates the days which have been spent, a possession which the gaurs, the dholes and the lions do not enjoy. For a moment she experienced bitter regret, the burning fever of remembrance. Then she became unconscious. The flash of insight which had laid death bare before her had faded away. She was only a dull animal which goes out, leaving the vast world undisturbed, and her face became rigid. Her companions set up a solemn wail, a confused melody which foreshadowed the rhythm and songs of a later humanity.

Time passed. It seemed as if the Chellians had disappeared, but Aoun heard them moving on his left, and knew that they were making their way over the crests to cut off his retreat at the other end of the pass. If they succeeded their victory would be certain. Despite their losses they were still superior in numbers, strength and agility. The Oulhamr alone dominated them, and among the women Ouchr alone equalled one of their warriors; but Ouchr and Aoun were weakened

by their wounds. The Oulhamr listened with growing anxiety to the enemy's movements.

At last several Chellians became visible. They had reached to within five ells of a ledge, sometimes by climbing on their companions' shoulders, sometimes by hollowing out steps in the friable schist. To reach the ledge it would only be necessary to cut five or six more steps on a smooth slightly inclined slope. They began to cut the two first. Aoun flung his last spear in order to stop them, but the weapon ricocheted from a projection; he also threw some stones but the distance rendered them innocuous.

A direct attack appeared to be impossible. The struggle lay between those who were building the raft and those who were cutting the steps. As no attack on the defile was imminent, Aoun sent back two of the women to hurry on the Wah's work.

The third step and then the fourth was cut. One more and the Dhole-Men would reach the ledge from which they could storm the crest. The last step appeared to be more difficult to cut than the others, but already a Chellian, mounted on the shoulders of one of his companions, was at work upon it.

Then Aoun said to those who waited with him, "Go and rejoin Zouhr. The raft must be finished . . . Aoun will defend the passage alone!"

Ouchr, having scrutinized the rocks, called the other women; Djeha cast a supplicating look towards Aoun and went off with a faint wail . . . Bending over the crenellated top, he threw stones, without being able to stop the Chellians. The work was finished. The first warrior dragged himself up to the ledge and was followed by another. Even the chief, who had been stupefied by Aoun's club, crawled along the schist. Aoun reached the other end of the pass in a few bounds, and went down to the river. The first Chellians were already swarming over the crest.

"The raft is not finished," said Zouhr, "but it will bear us to the other bank."

At a sign from Aoun, the women seized the extempor-

ized interwoven mass of branches and creepers, and took it down to the river. A prolonged shout was heard: the Chellians were coming . . . The women hustled one another on to the raft, and the enemy was only fifty ells away when Aoun and Zouhr followed them.

"Before eight mornings are past we shall have annihilated the Dholes!" growled the son of Urus as the water carried their raft away.

THE RETURN TO THE CAVE

The raft drifted. The eddies of the stream made it turn round and round, or else the current carried it away with alarming swiftness. Several times the Wolf-Women had flung themselves into the water to lighten the raft, which, being hastily constructed, was in danger of breaking up. But this expedient had to be abandoned on account of the crocodiles.

Meanwhile they approached the further bank. Far away in the distance they could see the forms of the Chellians. They would have to cross the river in order to continue the pursuit, and they could not do so in any other manner than that which the fugitives had employed.

Aoun said to Zouhr, "We must walk till evening. Before four days are over we shall have reached the cave."

They looked at each other; the same thought was at work in both their brains.

"Aoun and Ouchr are wounded," said the Wah sadly.

The Oulhamr replied, "If we do not get ahead of them the Dhole-Men will exterminate us!"

Ouchr shrugged her shoulders disdainfully; her wound was slight. She picked some herbs which she laid upon her hurt, while Zouhr dressed that of his companion. Then the little band moved on again. The road lay through marshy ground and was very rough, but towards evening Aoun and Zouhr began to recognize it. The following day and the one after passed without alarms; they were two days march from the chain of basalt rocks; Zouhr multiplied devices to hide their

trail. On the fifth morning the chain of basalt rocks appeared. From the top of a hill, near a bend of the river, they made out the long crenelated ridge. Aoun, who was shivering, fixed his ardent eyes on the dark mass and seized the Wah's shoulder murmuring, "We shall see the tiger of the Kzamms again!"

A low laugh distended his lips. The refuge in which they had passed days of security, the enormous beast who was their friend, the clear mornings, and the evenings when the red light of the fire played about the platform, came back to him in incoherent and happy pictures . . . The great Oulhamr turned his face, emaciated by loss of blood, towards Djeha and said, "We can brave a hundred Dhole-men in the cave."

Ouchr gave a stifled exclamation. She pointed down stream and they all distinctly saw the Chellians seven or eight hundred ells away. They resumed their flight as rapidly as the wounds of the Oulhamr and the woman-chief would allow. If they did not reach the chain of rocks before their enemies, they could not save themselves. There were at least twenty thousand ells to cover.

They had gone half the distance, but the Chellians had gained four thousand ells. They were swarming like jackals. The man they dreaded most among their enemies was weakened by his wound: they saw him limping along behind the little band and they shouted their war-cry in joyful triumph.

There was a short halt. Aoun fixed his eyes on Zouhr, mental as well as physical fever burnt in them. In that terrible moment the Oulhamr held back the Wah by his shoulder . . . But the howls came nearer; Aoun looked at Djeha, bowed his head towards his bleeding thigh, and measured the distance which separated him from the Dhole-Men.

He loosed Zouhr's shoulder with a great sigh, his companion bounded towards the giant feline's lair, while Aoun conducted the women and children to the cave.

THE GIANT FELINE or THE GIANT

When they reached the cave's mouth, Aoun and the women were only two thousand ells in advance of their enemies. He climbed up to the platform first, with Ouchr, to organize the escalade; then the others arrived in succession. First the children were hauled up; the women followed; the last three were already half way up when the Dhole-Men threw a shower of sharp stones. They rebounded from the rock. Aoun brandished his last spear; Ouchr and her companions threw stones. The Chellians were still too few in number to attempt an assault, so they retired out of reach of the projectiles, and when the rear-guard came up, the Wolf-Women were all safely in the cave.

It was impregnable. One man or one woman alone could reach the ledge at a time; after that they would have to climb on their companions' shoulders. One or two javelin thrusts would defeat each attempt.

The Chellians understood this. They were examining the chain of rocks in the hope of finding another way, but all round the cave the wall of rock was uncompromisingly unscaleable.

The Dhole-Men did not care. They had only to wait. Hunger and thirst would yield up the besieged to them. Down at the defile they had been able to escape and cross the river. Death would be their portion the day they attempted to leave the cave. What could eleven women and two men do against twenty stalwart warriors?

When the women were in safety, Aoun placed two of them to watch on the platform and forbade anyone to follow him. Then, having lit a torch, he went down to the deep cavern. He was tortured by anxiety. He thought it was impossible that the giant feline should not have recognized Zouhr, and yet he doubted.

Half way down the sound of a growl hurried his footsteps. The fissure was there, through which he had so often

spied upon the beast . . . Suddenly he breathed freely; he had seen Zouhr by the side of the carnivore, two enormous eyes glowed, and a halting whisper greeted the Oulhamr.

"The lion of the rocks is still the ally of the son of Earth and the son of Urus," said the Wah.

It was a moment of dull joy and vast hopes.

"The Dhole-Men have not followed Zouhr's trail?"

"They did not see him separate himself from the others: Zouhr had hidden himself among the boulders."

After having sniffed at Aoun for a long time, the giant feline lay down again and began to go to sleep.

Aoun resumed, "Zouhr will only go out at night, with the Kzamm tiger . . . he will attempt nothing against the Dhole-Men till Aoun is strong again . . . In the day time Zouhr will only go as far as the pool . . . the pool is near . . . Aoun and the women will need water."

Aoun sighed. He saw the pool, the river and springs. He was parched with thirst, which was increased by his wounds. He could not help saying, "Aoun is burnt up with thirst . . . but he will wait till evening."

"The pool is close!" Zouhr repeated. "Aoun must drink in order to get well again. I will go to the pool."

He went towards the entrance to the den. The giant feline hardly opened its eyes, for it scented nothing unusual. Zouhr glided to the pool. The lie of the land rendered him invisible from a distance. First he drank, then he dipped a primitive leather bottle into the water. It was made of antelope-skin and the upper part was fastened together with thorns. It contained sufficient liquid to quench the thirst of several men. Zouhr filled it and got back to the den. Aoun drank the life-giving water in long draughts, and his energy, freshness and confidence returned.

"Ouchr is wounded also," he said, "the others can drink to-night."

He carried the leather bottle into the upper cave, but, when Ouchr had drunk, he gave some of the water to Djeha also.

He slept till evening, and his strength and youth worked

for him while he slept. The fever decreased, and his wound, which only required rest, began to heal. When the twilight had died down over the jungle, Aoun rose so as to spy out what the Chellians were doing. They had lighted a big fire; their thick faces were turned towards the chain of rocks; it was easy to see that they were obstinate in their determination to conquer and destroy.

The women were racked with agony. Tired out by their long flight they too had slept. They were awoken by a terrible thirst more than by hunger. All turned their distressed eyes towards the Oulhamr, and thought of the water which he had brought in the skin bottle, of which only Ouchr and Djeha had had a share. The confidence of the weak in the strong alternated with fear.

Ouchr asked, "Where has Zouhr gone to?"

The son of Urus replied, "Zouhr will bring us meat and water before the night is over."

"Why is he not with us?"

"Ouchr will know that later."

He added, noticing that the woman-chief turned towards the darkness, "Aoun alone will go down to the depths of the cave! Otherwise we shall be hungry and thirsty."

Their feeble brains were at first excited by the mystery, then the women became resigned. It was sufficient that Aoun had given them hope. All the Wolf-Women had experienced times of scarcity and want, all, even the children, had endured long privations and dreadful periods of suspense.

The stars in the sky continued their eternal course and the Dhole-Men slept. Most of the women had gone to sleep again; even Aoun was resting.

Towards midnight the sound of a call came up from the abyss and woke the Oulhamr. He lighted a torch and went down. The giant feline and the Wah had returned from hunting; the carcase of an enormous swamp deer lay on the floor of the den. The Man-without-Shoulders had already cut off a haunch, which he passed up through the fissure, then he went to get a first leather bottle full of water. . . .

When Aoun returned with the meat and water there was

excitement among the women and a confused re-awakening of hero-worship. The cave still contained some wood, left there by the two companions before their exodus. Aoun, after having gone back to fetch more water, lighted a fire and had the venison cooked. It was an imprudent defiance. The Chellian watchers informed their chief, who stood up stupefied. The thing was too complex for him. He guessed that there had been wood in the cave, but he thought the flesh must have been that of an animal killed during their flight. Had there been a second entrance the fugitives would have escaped by it. . . . To make sure he sent some warriors to the other side of the chain of rocks.

They went round the southern spur and tried to make out the crevices and caverns by the light of the moon. They found nothing but narrow fissures, small crevices and one or two places of shelter under overhanging rocks. They were stopped for some time by the deep gully by which Zouhr had escaped from the lion; when they had passed it they saw a dark cavern. . . . A strong smell was wafted to them on the night breeze; the warriors realized that a wild beast was near and halted. Their own scent spread towards the den. A massive form advanced towards them, a loud roar shook the air, and the terrified warriors fled wildly, having recognized the presence of the most dreaded of the carnivores.

The chief was confirmed in his opinion that no other outlet was open to the besieged besides the one which his warriors were watching. If any doubt remained in his mind it was dissipated during the following days, for Aoun and the women shewed themselves at regular times on the platform: therefore flight was impossible. He need only wait and watch. He prepared for the hour to come, when he could massacre them all.

The Oulhamr's recovery was rapid: his hot blood quickly healed his wound, the fever had disappeared and he spent his time in teaching the women to sharpen the stones which served them as missiles. Below, in the cave, Zouhr continued to provide the refugees with meat and water. He accustomed the giant feline to follow him: the beast, ob-

scurely conscious of the useful cunning of the man, consented to be guided. Zouhr foresaw its impulses, and guessed what its actions would be according to circumstances; he fathomed the shades of its moods, and conformed himself to them with so much cleverness that the wild beast attached itself to the Wah more surely than it would have done to one of its own species.

On the eighth night, Aoun having gone down to take the meat said, "My wound has healed. The son of Urus can now fight the Dhole-Men. Tomorrow night Zouhr will bring the Kzamms tiger to the other side of the rocks."

The Wah remained silent for a time. Then he replied, "Listen! . . . Zouhr noticed this morning that one of the stones in the fissure shook. If we could pull it out, the opening would be large enough to let a man pass, and too narrow for the lion of the rocks to get through."

He put his hand on the lowest projecting stone and shaking it, caused it to oscillate. First it moved almost imperceptibly, but gradually it gained in impetus. . . . Aoun, full of admiration, joined his efforts to those of the Wah: his muscular arm made the stone rock. Then he pulled with all his strength, while Zouhr pushed with both hands. First one fragment became detached, then two others. The Oulhamr threw them behind him, and lying flat on the ground penetrated into the den. The giant feline, impatient of this commotion, had ceased to devour his prey. He sprang up in a manner that was almost menacing; but a caress from Zouhr at once appeased him and he sniffed Aoun amicably.

"We can surprise the Dhole-Men," cried the Oulhamr.

The Wah shewed him, at the entrance to the cave, a dozen javelins which he had fashioned during his long solitary days, "We will fight them at a distance," he said.

On the following day, Aoun and Zouhr made two more javelins, so that their total number was fourteen. At twilight, the Oulhamr said to Ouchr and her companions, "Aoun and Zouhr will fight the Dhole-Men to-night! Let the Wolf-Women hold themselves in readiness. . . ."

Ouchr heard with astonishment, "How will Aoun and Zouhr meet?" she asked.

He began to laugh, "We have enlarged the passage between two caves. . . . We will pass to the other side of the rocks and we will attack the Dhole-Men with our ally."

"Aoun and Zouhr have an ally?"

"They have made an alliance with the tiger of the Kzamms!"

Ouchr listened, stupefied. Her soul being simple she did not long attempt to understand. Her confidence in the great Oulhamr was stronger than all possible surprise.

The warrior went on, "The women must not come down to the plain until they hear Aoun call! The tiger would tear them in pieces."

Djeha, who was more surprised than the other women, turned her eyes, bright with curiosity, towards Aoun, "Cannot the tiger pass from one cave to the other?" she asked.

"The entrance is too small for him!" was the reply.

The wonderful after-glow began to fade in the sky; a pale star began to twinkle. Aoun went down to the lower cave.

The Chellians' fire now only shed an uncertain light. Three men however still watched. The others were asleep in a rocky enclosure which made them safe from all surprises. Two of the watchers were dozing; the third, obeying the orders of his chief, prowled round the fire, and lifted his eyes often towards the cave.

The Chellian had just thrown some small branches on the embers, when looking up he caught sight of a form on the ledge. It was a woman. She bent over the ledge watching him. The warrior stretched out his hand, armed with a javelin, towards her and mocked her silently. His laugh however quickly ceased. At the base of the chain of rocks another human form had come into view, whose tall stature and broad chest it was impossible to mistake. The Dhole-Man considered it for some time in speechless amazement, and asked himself how the man had dared to descend to the plain. He called the other watchers, who all three brandished their weapons and shouted their alarm cry.

Aoun now left the rocks. He boldly approached the fire, and when he was within range he flung a pointed stone. It hit one of the watchers on the head, making only a slight wound, for the Oulhamr had thrown it from too far away. Another stone grazed the shoulder of another warrior. . Vociferous cries resounded, and dusky forms surged from the rocky enclosure on all sides. . . . Then Aoun rose to his full height and replied by giving his war cry. There was a short pause, during which the Chellians alternately considered the Oulhamr and the place. Two women had now joined the other on the ledge; Aoun alone, and armed only with his club and a few stones, was to be seen upon the plain. The bewildered Dhole chief tried in vain to understand; his certainty that Aoun was alone was blended with vague distrust. The instinct of war triumphed; a guttural voice gave the order to attack and they flung themselves forward. Twenty active bodies converged upon the son of Urus.

He threw one last stone, then took to flight. His pace seemed to have diminished; the swiftest among his pursuers were gaining upon him, and the others, excited by the imminence of the capture, followed with great rapidity. At times it seemed as if the Oulhamr stumbled; sometimes again he appeared to make a great effort to gain ground, which he immediately lost. The chief was only thirty ells from the fugitive when he approached the spur which terminated the chain of rocks. The Chellians howled with triumph. . . . Aoun with a sort of lamentation, swerved and took refuge among the rocks. They formed a series of gullies, which all ended, towards the south, in a wider pass.

The chief stopped, threw a rapid glance around, and commanded several warriors to bar the other outlet, while he sent eight men in direct pursuit.

A fierce laugh rang out, then a roar, and a huge body sprang down among the rocks.

"The Dhole-Men are about to die!"

The giant feline was already upon the Chellians. Three men fell, their bodies ripped up, a fourth rolled on the ground his throat torn open. . . .

Aoun and Zouhr had climbed a flat rock; their bows twanged; arrows pierced the enemy's chests, their thighs and shoulders, while the carnivore emerged from the rocks, crushed one fugitive and tore another to pieces.

Panic seized the Dhole-Men. Bewildering mystery mingled with the horror of death in their dull brains. The chief himself fled. Aoun had regained his full strength. Bounding like a leopard he overtook the rear guard, and his club crashed on their hard heads. . . .

When the Chellians got back to the circle of rocks there were only eight of them left: the others lay stretched on the grass, either dead or incapable of taking any further part in the struggle.

"Let Zouhr stop the tiger of the Kzamms," cried Aoun.

Sheltered in their stronghold, the vanquished men again became formidable. Despair was upon them; wielded between the crenellations their spears might kill the brute.

The giant feline allowed himself to be restrained. He saw his prey scattered all round. He calmly seized a dead body in his jaw and went towards his den.

For a little while uncertainty held the son of Urus motionless. Then he said, "Zouhr will accompany the Kzamm tiger. He will then come back by the higher cave and tell the women to hold themselves in readiness!"

The Wah and the giant feline disappeared behind the rocks: Aoun began to pick up the spears and to withdraw them from the bodies, then he went slowly towards the Chellians. He caught sight of them between the interstices of their wall; he could have killed several of them, but the soul of Naoh was in him, full of deep pity: "Why did the Dhole-Men attack the Hairy Men. . . . Why did they want to kill Aoun and the Wolf-Women?"

His ringing voice had a sad tone in it; the Chellians listened to him in silence. The deep chested chief rose up between two boulders and made as if he would attack him. The Oulhamr lifted his bow and went on, "Aoun is stronger and quicker than the Dhole chief! and he can kill him at a distance."

Up above them the women were uttering shouts of triumph. They had watched the vicissitudes of the struggle, the extraordinary apparition of the wild beast, and their souls were full of mystic confidence. Djeha was the first to go down, then Ouchr, then the others, except one who stayed to guard the cave.

They clustered round Aoun, and gazed at the rocky circle with somber interest; remembering their sufferings they cast insults at the Chellians. The Dhole-Men remained silent, but they were strong and resolute, holding their long spears in readiness. Their position was impregnable; without Aoun's presence, they would have been the strongest. With the exception of Ouchr, not one of the women could have resisted their attack; they knew it, and despite their hate, moved about with great caution.

When the Wolf-Women drew nearer the fire, however, they took pleasure in throwing branches, brushwood and grass on it. It soon revived and the flames leapt up magnificently. The women brought wood from all directions, crying, "The Dhole-Men dare not fight! They will die of hunger and thirst!"

Gradually, as the stars turned towards their setting, or rose in the East, anxiety and impatience began to grow. The besieged appeared more formidable. The besiegers feared a trap; none of the women dared sleep. . . . Even Aoun and Zouhr began to think it would be necessary to fight.

The Wah said, "We must force the Dhole-Men to leave their refuge."

By dint of hard thinking an idea had come to him.

"They cannot resist fire. . . . Aoun, Zouhr and the women will fling flaming brands at them!" he said.

The Oulhamr gave an enthusiastic cry. Both of them began to cut branches, and expose their points to the flames. Then they called the women, and the Wah having explained the proposed stratagem to them, they all took burning brands in their hands and flung themselves upon the stone circle.

A rain of fire fell upon the Chellians. . . . At first they resisted, but their chests swelled with fear and fury. Suffocated by the smoke, made giddy by their burns, little by little any peril seemed preferable to that which threatened to destroy them without giving them a chance of fighting. . . .

The thick-set body of the chief rose up on a boulder, he bounded forward with a hoarse howl, and seven warriors rushed after him. Aoun ordered the women to beat a retreat. Twice the bows twanged and two Dhole-Men fell. Five of the remaining six charged the group of women and the Wah; the sixth rushed upon Aoun, who stood apart. The son of Urus flung a new spear which grazed his opponent's shoulder, then, rising to the full of his magnificent stature, he waited. He might have fled, and so tired out his adversary; he preferred to fight him. It was the broad-shouldered chief, with a head like a block of granite, who advanced upon him. He brandished his spear and also an enormous horn. The weapon came in contact with the club, swerved, turned aside and returned to earth like a thunderbolt. Aoun's chest was bleeding, but his club broke the chief's bones. He fell on his knees and dropped his spear, with the resignation of a vanquished wild beast, knowing that his end had come. Aoun had picked up his club and did not lower it. His breast contracted with a strange feeling of disgust; that movement of pity which was his weakness, and the weakness of Naoh, came upon him . . .

Below them two women lay stretched on the grass, but Zouhr's spears and javelins had done their work: three Chellians groaned in the agonies of death; the Wolf-Women finished them off. A fourth, the youngest of the party, mad with terror, ran towards Aoun. When he found himself in close proximity to the enormous club, his muscles gave way and he fell prostrate.

The women rushed forward to kill him; the son of Urus spread out his arms crying, "His life is in the hands of Aoun."

They stopped, their faces contracted with hate; then, hearing the groans of those who had been wounded in the first

encounter, they went off to hack their bodies to pieces. Aoun listened gloomily to their cries of agony and vaguely rejoiced that Djeha had not followed her companions.

THE HORDE

Aoun, Zouhr and the Wolf-Women remained for a month in the chain of rocks. Only one woman had died; four others were hurt; Aoun's wound was not serious. Now that they were delivered from the Chellians they were masters of the savannah, the jungle and the river. The giant feline eliminated all other wild beasts by his mere presence. Thus life was ample and easy. Aoun and Zouhr tasted the pleasure of repose in full measure, after all the perils they had passed through. Zouhr loved those dreamy hours, when all kinds of remembrances and pictures surged up in his mind. His soul knew the sweetness of thoughts of the past, which had been transmitted to him by a race destined to extinction. He only woke up to devise traps for game, or to gather edible roots.

Even in repose Aoun was a prey to tumultuous instincts and to confused desires, which filled his whole being. His senses were continually surprised by the subtle curves of Djeha's young body, by her lovely floating hair, and the changing lights in her eyes. Everything about her seemed perpetually to renew itself, like the early mornings on the river, and the flowers on the savannah. Sometimes a movement of revolt shot through the wanderer's breast. He became like other men, and despised weakness; his instinct of tenderness changed to a rough and bellicose mood, and he turned towards Ouchr, prepared to ask her to celebrate the marriage rites of her race, by flinging Djeha on the ground and wounding her bosom with a pointed flint.

The women asked for no other existence than their present one, which gave them such profound security. They lost the desire for liberty, and were content to place their destiny in the hands of the great Oulhamr. The future had no place in their limited imaginations; after their many misfortunes

they desired nothing but the tranquil abundance which they enjoyed at present, and which was renewed every morning and evening. They even allowed Aoun to liberate the two prisoners. He had conducted them himself to the place where the stream and the river divided.

The rainy season was now only five weeks distant. Aoun thought more often of his horde, of Naoh, the conqueror of the Kzamms, the Red Dwarfs and Aghoo the Hairy, of the evening fires, and of his rough companions, of whose ferocity, however, he did not approve.

One morning he said to Ouchr, "Listen: Aoun and Zouhr are going to visit their horde; the Wolf-Women will choose a cave close to the mountains. . . After the cold weather, the Oulhamrs will come. . . . They will be the wolf-Women's allies."

Ouchr and the other Wolf-Women felt the weight of impending destiny. They were on the plain near the bank of the river. They thronged round the son of Urus; the younger ones wailed . . . Djeha had bounded to her feet. Her breast heaved, her great eyes were full of tears. Aoun, deeply moved, regarded her for some time in silence.

He said, "Ouchr has promised that Djeha shall be Aoun's wife. Djeha will obey."

He turned towards Ouchr, and trembling slightly murmured, "Give me Djeha as my companion."

Ouchr threw Aoun a long melancholy glance, then she seized Djeha by the back of her neck and flung her on the ground. With a pointed stone she then made a long wound, which reached from the shoulder to the middle of the girl's chest. Blood gushed out, and Aoun put his lips to it. Ouchr pronounced the words which their ancestors had used long ago, and which gave the woman to the man.

The next day the little band started off. Aoun and Zouhr had left the giant feline sadly. The Wah felt the parting more than his companion, having no love of woman in his heart. His race would die out with him; he bitterly regretted leaving the cave and that alliance with the great wild beast which he had made. Nothing attached him to the Oulhamr

horde; he was a stranger in it, and the young Oulhamrs despised him. . . .

They passed the place where the yellow lions had fled before the elephants; they passed close to the granite ridge where the sabre-tooth had devoured the rhinoceros and where Aoun had killed the sabre-tooth; then they came to the rugged promontory which the mountains threw out towards the land of the Chellians.

From that high promontory they had discovered the river, and the strange red beast which lived before the time of the giant feline, itself a precursor of the lion and tiger. It was there that the Wolf-Women chose a spacious cave in which to pass the rainy season. Then they helped Aoun and Zouhr to find a way towards the mountain.

The separation was a hard one. The women would no longer have near them that strength which had delivered them from the Chellians; they would be alone in a world full of dangers. When they reached the foot of the ravine, where the travellers were to leave them, they made a long lamentation. Aoun cried out, "We will come back to the banks of the great river."

His own heart was heavy. The land he was leaving was indeed full of ambushes and enemies, but he had triumphed, he had overcome the perils; men and beasts had given way before his strength. He was carrying off Djeha.

Zouhr dreamed of no other joy than that of returning to the chain of rocks.

One day succeeded another. Aoun, Zouhr and Djeha went up the rugged mountain paths. Aoun was impatient to see his horde again. Every stage they accomplished brought back the remembrance of former joys to his young soul.

The time came when they found again the lofty defile through which they had passed when they left the mountain; then they arrived before the fissure. As it had grown larger they had less trouble in passing through it. The caverns were there, re-echoing the sound of water. In them they slept, and two days passed before they could find the horde.

They found them at last at the decline of day, at the foot of a hill, under an enormous over-hanging porphyry rock. The women were heaping up dry branches, which Naoh was to set a light to. Their watchers shouted, and Aoun was the first to appear before the son of the Leopard. There was a great silence. The women gazed at Djeha with malevolent eyes.

Naoh said gravely, "A whole season has passed since you went away."

"We have crossed the mountain and we have discovered vast hunting grounds," replied Aoun.

Naoh's face lit up. He remembered the fierce days when he set off with Nam and Gaw to reconquer fire; he lived over again his battle with the grey wolf and the tigress, his pursuit of the Men-Devourers, his alliance with the chief of the mammoths, the perfidy of the Red Dwarfs and the gentleness of the Wahs, the forest of the Blue-Haired men, the surprise of the Bear of the Caves, and, on their return, the terrible encounter with Aghoo the Hairy. . . . He had brought back fire, and the secret of extracting it from stones, which he had learnt from the Men-without-Shoulders.

"Go on," he said, "Naoh listens to the son of Urus"

He set fire to the pile of branches and encouraged his son to speak.

Gradually, as he heard the recital, his adventurous soul became excited. The red beast filled him with surprise, but he revolted when Aoun maintained that the elephants were bigger than mammoths, "No beast is bigger than the mammoth, with whom Naoh lived in the country of the Kzamms."

He recognized the wild beast which lived among the chain of rocks, and asked Aoun, "Does he not kill the tiger as easily as the lion kills the panther?"

He was full of enthusiasm over the alliance with the giant feline. He turned his benevolent face towards Zouhr and said, "The Wahs were the most clever among men. It was they who found out the secret of obtaining fire from stones. They could traverse rivers by means of interlaced branches, and they knew the waters which flow underground!"

His breast heaved with excitement as they told of their fights with the Chellians; his eyes sparkled, he laid his hand on the young man's shoulder saying, "Aoun has the heart and the strength of a chief!"

The Oulhamrs around them were listening, but they remained full of distrust; they were thinking that Naoh had reconquered the secret of fire, and saved the horde when they were dying of cold on the rocks, while Aoun had only brought back a strange girl with him, and that weakly companion whom no one liked.

Khouam, son of Aegager exclaimed, "Did not Aoun say that those lands were much hotter than ours? . . . The Oulhamrs will not be able to live in them. . . . When we traversed the Burnt Plain, the warriors and women died like grasshoppers in autumn."

Dull voices approved his words. Aoun understood that the horde loved him even less than before he went away.

For a week, the son of Urus tasted the sweetness of being among the men of his race. He hunted with the others, or else stayed near Djeha, to whom the women of the horde would not speak. Little by little sadness took possession of his breast. He felt he had accomplished a task which was as great as that of Naoh, for though he had not brought back the secret of fire, he had told his horde that an immense land, teeming with animal life, existed beyond the mountains. He knew himself to be superior to all the young men, and as strong as the chief. He could see that the Oulhamrs did not admire him at all. All of them preferred Khouam, whose club and spear could not have fought against those of Aoun. Khouam would be chief if the son of the Leopard died, and he would have to obey Khouam. That would be hard for Aoun, for Khouam would incite hatred towards him, Djeha and Zouhr, which would grow rapidly.

Even before his departure they had reproached the son of Urus with preferring the Wah's company, and now he had united himself to a maiden from a country into which they had never penetrated. Thus he became a stranger to them. The women especially hated him. They turned away from

Djeha with insulting words, and when several of them passed her together a hoarse murmur showed their dislike. Even Aoun's sisters fled from her.

When he found himself alone in the twilight with the young Wolf-Woman and the Wah, Aoun felt his humiliation most keenly. Terrible impatience burnt in his veins.

After a few days he revolted. He no longer tried to draw closer to the others, but obstinately isolated himself with Zouhr and Djeha; when they were hunting he went off alone whenever he had received no special order from Naoh to stay with the horde. He wandered for days together near the underground river, and often, compelled by an impulse which was too strong for him, he found himself again by that fissure which led to the land of adventure.

One morning he set out in pursuit of a leopard. Leopards abounded in the neighbouring forests. Powerful, circumspect and audacious, voracious and active, they exterminated the deer, antelopes and onagers, and even killed young aurochs. Naoh did not hunt them, being bound to them by an obscure totemism; many Oulhamrs feared them, because they defended themselves madly when wounded; few solitary hunters dared to attack them.

Aoun prowled for a long time in the forest without finding the trace of one. A small water course trickled on a flinty bed; the wanderer became aware of the smell of a leopard. He lay down among the ferns and waited, motionless.

He noticed up stream, under long leafy arcades, a little rocky eminence, the advanced part of which formed a sort of cave. A beast lay asleep there in profound security, its head on its paws. Despite the distance and the waning light, Aoun could see it was a leopard. About twelve hundred ells separated the man from the beast. The warrior advanced eight hundred ells before the beast was disturbed from its slumbers. As he plunged into a tangle of high grass, the round head was raised, two fires of amber and emerald were lit up in the shadow of the rocks.

Aoun lay flat on the ground, while the wild beast sniffed the air for a long time. The sparkling eyes gazed round for a

moment, then the muzzle dropped, and the spotted body again became inert. Aoun allowed many minutes to elapse before moving on. He had still about two hundred ells to cover. Then he could shoot an arrow from his bow. His weapon could not inflict a mortal wound at that distance, even if it reached its mark, but Aoun hoped that the beast, becoming enraged, would accept battle.

A gentle breeze sprang up, which carried the smell of the hunter away from the animal. He hastened his steps and gained a hundred and fifty ells, then he hid behind a tree.

Again the leopard lifted its head to listen. Then it came out of its lair, the better to sniff the suspicious smell.

Suddenly a belling was heard, a doe bounded out between the sycamores and the leopard dashed after it. The doe took a turn towards the tree which hid Aoun from view; the warrior rose, his bow twanged. The leopard, wounded at the back of its neck, gave a frenzied howl. It hesitated, gazed at its adversary and slipped away among the ferns.

Aoun placed himself in an open space, in order to guard against a surprise, holding his club in one hand and a spear in the other. The leopard seemed unable to make up its mind to attack him. It could distinctly see the man through the thick vegetation, and it tried to find a way of approaching him under cover and leaping on his back.

Its fury had abated; it hardly felt its wound, and although it had proved itself too clever for all the Oulhamrs' traps, it realized that it now had to do with a dangerous adversary. It tried to improve its position, but found itself several bounds length from its enemy in whichever direction it turned. Aoun, having a good view of its spotted fur, flung his spear. It fell among the ferns and the leopard retreated into the deep thickets.

Other creatures had for some time been moving in the forest; the hunter became aware of the approach of a band of men. Shouting a rallying cry he dashed off in pursuit of the leopard. Heads appeared here and there; spears were flung without result. Suddenly Khouam shewed his muscular body, and brandishing his bow let fly an arrow. Hit in the

flank, the leopard sprang up and turned, ready for battle. . . . Khouam had vanished; all the other heads had hidden themselves; only Aoun remained visible.

The leopard hesitated no longer; it was within reach of the son of Urus in three bounds, then it sprang. . . . Aoun's club stopped it and threw it to the ground; he shattered its skull, and the beast rolled over and expired with a hoarse cry.

Then Khouam and his companions ran up. Aoun watched them come, leaning on his club. He thought that they would admire his strength; an amiable gentleness and the attraction of race rose in him. But the faces were hard. One of the men who followed Khouam, like Zouhr followed Aoun, exclaimed, "Khouam has conquered the leopard!"

There were loud grunts of approval. Khouam drew himself up by the body and showed his arrow, which was deeply imbedded in the beast's ribs. Aoun revolted, "Khouam did not conquer the leopard."

The Oulhamrs mocked him and displayed the arrow; the man who had first spoken went on, "It was Khouam! Aoun only finished the victory."

The son of Urus raised his club; anger raged within him; he shouted disdainfully, "What is a leopard? Aoun has conquered the red beast, the tiger and the Dhole-Men. Only Naoh is as strong as he!"

Khouam did not give way. He felt the support of his companions' presence around him.

"Khouam fears neither the lion nor the tiger!"

A bitter sorrow gnawed at Aoun's heart. He was like a stranger to the men of his race. Seizing the carcass he flung it towards them, "There. The son of Urus will not strike the Oulhamrs. He gives them the leopard."

They no longer mocked him; their ferocious eyes were fixed on his tall stature and his enormous club; they were all cunningly aware that his strength was like that of the great carnivores. But they detested it, and disdained his gentleness.

Aoun returned to the camp full of disgust and annoyance.

When he got near to the overhanging rock, he found Djeha all alone, crouched upon a rock. She rose when she saw him, with a wail . . . her cheek was bleeding.

"Djeha has hurt herself?" said he passing his arm round her shoulders.

She replied in a low voice, "The women threw stones."

"They threw stones at Djeha?"

She nodded her head; a shudder ran through the wanderer; and seeing that the camp was deserted, "Where are they?" he asked.

I do not know."

He bowed his head sullenly. The pain which he felt became intolerable. In the silence which succeeded he realized that he no longer wished to live with the horde:

"Would Djeha like to return to the Wolf-Women with Aoun and Zouhr?" he murmured.

She lifted her face towards him full of joy, which she tried to hide. She was a submissive and timid creature. She suffered acutely among the Oulhamrs; she endured their hate, the disdain and mocking laughs of the women, and was the more overcome because she hardly understood their language. She dared not complain, and would not have spoken of her wound if Aoun had not interrogated her.

She exclaimed, "Djeha will go with Aoun wherever he goes."

"Does she not prefer to live with her horde?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"Then we will go back to the bank of the great river."

She gave a sigh of relief and leant her head on the man's shoulder.

When the Wah returned from the underground lands, the son of Urus drew him to a distance from the camp, for the women and the hunters had returned.

"Listen," he said abruptly, "Aoun wants to see the Wolf-Women, the Kzamm tiger and the high cave again."

Zouhr lifted his vague eyes; his lips opened with a laugh. He knew that his companion was living through bad days

in the horde, and his own heart was heavy, "Zouhr will be happy in the high cave," he said.

His words dissipated the wanderer's last indecision. He went to Naoh, who was resting apart from the horde, under a jutting rock of porphyry, and declared, "The warriors do not like the son of Urus. He wishes to go back to the other side of the mountain. He will live with the Wolf-Women and be the ally of the Oulhamrs."

Naoh listened gravely. He was fond of the young man, but he was aware of the horde's aversion for him, and foresaw painful struggles:

"The horde is displeased to see Aoun consorting with strangers," he said, "if he stays with the horde they will not forgive him. The Oulhamrs respect their allies. They have fought with the Men-without-Shoulders. They will like Aoun better when he has left the horde. Listen! In the spring Naoh will conduct his people to the other side of the mountain. He will occupy the plateau while the Wolf-Women occupy the plain. If he comes down to the plain during the cold season, he will not hunt on the same side of the river as Aoun. So the alliance will be secure!"

He laid his hand on the young man's shoulder and added, "The son of Urus would have been a great chief among the Oulhamrs, if he had not preferred the Wah to his own men, and a strange woman to the women of his tribe!"

The son of Urus understood the truth of those words. He however regretted nothing: more than ever he preferred Zouhr and Djeha. The separation from Naoh would be his only sorrow.

"Aoun will bring teeth and shining stones to the Son of the Leopard," he murmured.

Twilight came on. A sweet melancholy feeling came over the two men; their souls were as much alike as their destinies were different; each one had carried his strength and audacity very far. Yet almost identical acts had made a chief of the father and an exile of the son.

EPILOGUE

Since the previous day a couple of sabre-tooth tigers had established themselves among the rocks, three hundred paces from the Wolf-Women's cave. They knew the agility, strength, cunning and audacity of these devourers of pachyderms. None of the women dared venture out. During the night the red beasts had prowled for a long time about their refuge. Sometimes they came nearer, and their snarls and rough growls could be heard. Then the women shouted all together and threw sharp stones. The projectiles had no effect, however, and were lost among the boulders, thorns and branches accumulated for the defense of the cave. At last other prey claimed the attention of the tigers, but during the day, the male or the female would return, between two sleeps, to watch the enigmatical beings.

The rainy season was near.

As they took refuge behind their barricade, in the shadow of the porphyry rocks, the women thought of the wanderer whose terrible arms had vanquished the Dhole-Men; and their agony was increased by the thought. He would have struck down the red beasts with his club and his spear . . .

There was no doubt that the sabre-tooth tigers must have captured insufficient prey on the previous night, for they came to spy upon the cave long before twilight. The day was already darkened by the clouds that had covered the sky; a cutting wind came up from the plain and howled dismally among the rocks; some of the children were crying, and the

Wolf-Women, crowded together near the opening, were looking out mournfully on the landscape; Ouchr was thinking that the wild beasts would continue to inhabit the rocks.

The wind hurled itself with greater fury against the mountain, the sabre-tooth tigers appeared together before the refuge and lifted up their voices in a roar. Ouchr much distressed, went forward to prepare the defense.

Suddenly a long weapon whirled through the air and one of the wild beasts, the male, hit in the back of the neck, flung himself towards the Wolf-Women. Spears were thrust firmly through the rocky openings, and a second javelin was imbedded in the red body; a clamour arose above the noise of the wind, a great form appeared and a club whirled formidably.

Falling over each other in the attempt, the women thrust aside the boulders that defended their den. . . . The male sabre-tooth was lying on the ground, the female, terrified by its cries of agony and the sudden appearance of so many enemies, fled towards the river.

The Wolf-Women, growling with joy, pressed round their saviour. All the massive faces lit up; the large eyes were fixed upon Aoun with excited worship. He brought with him security, the certainty of conquering the elements, beasts and men. . . . The son of Urus, feeling that he should never go back to his life among the Oulhamrs, cried, "Listen! Aoun and Zouhr have returned to the Wolf-Women. They will not leave them again. They will live all together in the big cave near to which they exterminated the Dhole-Men!"

As he spoke, their joy became deeper: the Wolf-Women bowed before him as a sign of love and obedience. His heart swelled, he forgot the bitter disappointment he had suffered on his return to the men of his own race, and only thought how a new horde would grow up under his leadership.

"Ouchr and the Wolf-Women will be your warriors," said the woman chief. "Where you live they will live. They will do your will and follow your customs."

"They will become a horde to be feared," said Aoun,

"they will learn to make and wield harpoons, spears, hatchets, bows and arrows. They will fear neither the Dhole-Men nor the Red beast."

The women collected branches; a magnificent fire lit up the darkness; the night hours were no longer full of ambushes, and the happiness which spread over those youthful hearts seemed to extend itself over the great river and to know no bounds!

Zouhr alone was melancholy; he would not feel satisfied until he saw again the chain of rocks and the giant feline.

The wind howled as the little horde reached the cave on the twelfth day. Fox-bats had sought a refuge there, but they flew away when they saw Ouchr; a falcon took wing with a hoarse cry. Standing on the platform, Aoun stretched out his hand towards the savannah and jungle. They teemed with animal life; a never-ending population of fishes, tortoises, crocodiles, hippopotami, pythons, purple herons, yellow-headed cranes, black storks, ibis, cormorants and black-footed geese lived in the river or on its banks; the savannah, jungle and forest were over-populated with swamp deer, axis, antelopes, fallow deer, wild asses, horses, onagers, gaurs, buffaloes and wild goats; numberless parrots, doves, birds of the sparrow tribe and pheasants filled the branches; the rich vegetation would supply them with roots, tender stalks and fruit. Aoun felt himself to be stronger than the great carnivores, and rich in the blood of a conquering race that coursed in his veins. . . . Around him, Djeha, Ouchr and the others seemed the continuation of himself. . . .

The Wah went slowly down towards the deep cave. He went to the fissure and looked in: the den was empty. . . . Zouhr shivered, crept through the opening, and began to explore the deep shadows of the cave. Fresh bones mingled with the dry ones, the smell of the giant feline hung about in the darkness. The son of Earth left the cave and wandered about for a long time in great anxiety, without heeding the wild beasts that might be hidden in the underwood. . . . He had hardly entered the jungle when his face cleared.

"The Lion of the Rocks!"

There among the bamboos, the colossal form was couched on the body of a swamp-deer. . . . The feline raised its great head at the sound of the man's voice, then with a gentle roar it bounded towards him. . . .

Zouhr's joy was complete. When the animal came close to him, he passed his two hands through its mane, and a pride equal to that of Aoun swelled his feeble breast.

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